

One of the interesting dynamics about life is – timing. It’s often totally unrated or under rated. For instance, a quarterback and a receiver just happen to click together and be on the same team at the same time at the top of their game. Change any of these “coincidences” and both may not play as well with different teams and in different years with different opponents.

Often a business develops with the right circumstances that cannot be duplicated in the exact same way because of all kinds of things – like being the first to produce a new product, or having nearby resources or benefiting from a new transportation system. For example, without the railroads it would have taken a lot longer for the western Canada and US to develop.

Or even a church plant. Without the right combination of people, with the same passion and vision and the various skills needed, and the openness of the local community, often church plants fail.

Here is another view of Covid-19. It will be interesting to keep seeing how our traditions change, what opportunities emerge for congregations, which congregations will see and seek new ways to do ministry, and so on. “All things work together for good,” is not just about individuals. We know from research that often revivals occur, as well as mission work, when the right social situation is “ripe” for people to need God as well as listen and convert.

God’s Timing: In the Grip of Coronavirus, God Is Loosening Our Roots

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May 27, 2020

ChurchLeaders.com

They say timing is everything. God’s timing.

I have a book coming out this summer called *What Are You Going to Do With Your Life?* It’s an encapsulation of one of the core messages of the Summit, that all people are called to the mission of God and you should consider doing something new and radical with your life by planting it somewhere where the gospel is not known. In other words, you have to get a job somewhere, so why not get it in a place greatly in need of the gospel, where you can be a part of a strategic church plant? My prayer has been that this book will motivate thousands—maybe even tens of thousands—to go and serve among unreached peoples and in less-evangelized areas in the United States.

When the coronavirus hit, I thought, “Well, great. This is a terrible time for a book about moving your life overseas. People can’t even leave their houses! This is going to go over like a lead balloon.”

Does that sound like a selfish concern during a time like this? Yes.

Is it something that was on my mind? Also yes.

Selfish or not, I was feeling pretty discouraged about the whole thing. And then I received a copy of a short book that [John Piper](#) has written called *Coronavirus and Christ*. In it, he points out how in Acts 7 God used a calamity—a religious persecution that started with the stoning of Stephen—to produce the *greatest worldwide expansion of the gospel* to date.

The church hadn't asked for it. They weren't prepared for it. In one sense, Satan was behind it, with the purpose of discouraging the church. But God used it instead for a miraculous gospel advance.

I wrote Pastor John and told him about my discouragement, and he wrote back and said, "On the contrary, J.D., you should be very encouraged. Many around the world are praying that this very moment, which Satan means for hindering the Mission of the King to the nations, God will use for strategic advance. Your book will be well-timed. May God grant thousands to grasp what God is doing and madden the evil one by turning his tactical ripple against the kingdom into a tidal wave of completion."

First, let's just acknowledge that "madden the evil one by turning his tactical ripple against the kingdom into a tidal wave of completion" has to be one of the most Piper-esque lines ever written.

But, second, I believe he is right. In Genesis 50, God points out that what Satan meant for evil, God used for good. This is God's timing and way: He takes Satan's tactical ripples of opposition and transforms them into tsunami waves that accomplish his purposes.

In his book, Piper tells this story:

"ON JANUARY 9, 1985, PASTOR HRISTO KULICHEV, A CONGREGATIONAL PASTOR IN BULGARIA, WAS ARRESTED AND PUT IN PRISON. HIS CRIME WAS THAT HE PREACHED IN HIS CHURCH EVEN THOUGH THE STATE HAD APPOINTED ANOTHER MAN AS PASTOR WHOM THE CONGREGATION DID NOT ELECT. HIS TRIAL WAS A MOCKERY OF JUSTICE. AND HE WAS SENTENCED TO EIGHT MONTHS IN PRISON. DURING HIS TIME IN PRISON, HE MADE CHRIST KNOWN IN EVERY WAY HE COULD. WHEN HE GOT OUT, HE WROTE, 'BOTH PRISONERS AND JAILERS ASKED MANY QUESTIONS, AND IT TURNED OUT THAT WE HAD A MORE FRUITFUL MINISTRY THERE THAN WE COULD HAVE EXPECTED IN CHURCH. GOD WAS BETTER SERVED BY OUR PRESENCE IN PRISON THAN IF WE HAD BEEN FREE.'"

The global scope and seriousness of the coronavirus are great. What we need to see is that God's purposes during this time are greater. God is not waiting for the coronavirus to ebb before he can move again. He will work *even in this pandemic* to make his name known.

Timing is everything. *God's* timing.

As Piper says in [*Coronavirus and Christ*](#), God can use this time to "loosen the roots" of settled Christians so that the church would become, once again, a movement of people who sense the urgency of the Great Commission and move toward the mission field like never before.

May it be so!