

Covid Musing

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NSMC

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Here are two articles. First is about isolation – which all of have experienced in various ways and to some degree in 2020. But like most if not all situations, there are benefits as is described. What have you learned and how have you benefited from this very different year?

Also, the poem or writing by Sara Wenger Shenk, may help you process what has occurred to you and to all of us this last year. It might offer another way to prepare for Christmas.

How God Uses Isolation to Advance His Kingdom

By **Os Hillman** April 13, 2020 From ChurchLeaders.com

Several years ago I wrote a book entitled [Change Agent: Engaging your passion to be the one who makes a difference](#). During the writing of that book I discovered 6 unique stages God took his leaders through to become His change agents. One of the 6 stages I discovered was a Time of Isolation.

It seems God often set aside a leader away from his normal life for a greater purpose. For some it was jail time like the apostle Paul. Paul wrote many of his epistles when he was imprisoned. This would be said of Jeremiah, Isaiah and many others. *And He has made My mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of His hand He has hidden Me, and made Me a polished shaft; in His quiver He has hidden Me” (Isa 49:2).*

The apostle John was put on the [Island of Patmos](#) where he received the vision of Revelation. He did not die on this island, but God used his time of isolation on Patmos to download an important part of the Bible for God’s people.

John Bunyan was imprisoned twelve years for preaching the Gospel. What came from his time in prison was one of Christianity’s greatest classics – [Pilgrim’s Progress](#).

Sir Isaac Newton’s Greatest Discoveries Came in a 2-Year Time of Isolation

On Christmas Eve in 1664, a London resident named Goodwoman Phillips was found dead in the run-down district of St. Giles-in-the-Fields. Telltale “buboes” on her corpse left no doubt about the cause of death. Her house was sealed and the words “Lord Have Mercy On Us” were painted on the door in red: Phillips had died of bubonic plague.

Only a few other deaths from plague were reported over the next few months. But by April, the numbers had begun to climb markedly. When summer arrived, death was everywhere. Records from mid-July showed 2,010 deaths, spread among every parish in London. The death toll a week later had jumped to 7,496. Over a period of 18 months, the Great Plague of London, as the epidemic came to be called, would claim more than 100,000 lives – roughly a quarter of the city’s population.

Then as now, [social distancing](#) was an important response to the deadly outbreak. Urban residents who could afford to do so fled to the countryside. Among the institutions that closed for the duration was

Cambridge University, and among the students who headed home for what today we would call self-quarantining was a 23-year-old mathematics student by the name of Isaac Newton.

For the next year and a half, Newton remained at his family's farm in Lincolnshire, reading, studying, and thinking alone. While the bubonic plague raged elsewhere, Newton embarked on what he would later describe as the most intellectually productive period of his life.

One subject that had always interested Newton was light and color. Two years earlier, visiting the annual Sturbridge Fair near the university, he had purchased a small glass prism. He had been fascinated by the way the prism seemed to change white light into a spectrum of rainbow-like colors. No one understood where those colors came from; one theory was that the glass somehow added color to otherwise colorless light.

This wasn't the only discovery Newton made during his time of isolation. Newton's laws laid the foundation for classical mechanics, and upon it, generations of physicists would build towering edifices. The mathematics required to derive these laws – which involve multiple variables with continuously changing quantities – did not exist in Newton's day. So he invented an entirely new mathematical discipline. Without calculus, modern mathematics, engineering, and statistics would be impossible. [1]

God often used isolation to [prepare his leaders](#) for a greater assignment. Joseph was sold into slavery and later accused of a crime he did not do which landed him in prison. God used over 13 years of preparation for what would be an 81-year assignment as second in command of Egypt.

Nelson Mandela would be imprisoned for 27 years for his anti-apartheid, revolutionary political activities in South Africa. He would move from the jail cell to the presidential palace for five years as president of South Africa from 1994-1999.

He turns messes into messages and messengers.

What I observed is God turns our messes into messages and creates messengers in the process. God initiates a time of separation from past dependencies to realign values of the leader. King David was forced to flee Saul, who was trying to kill him. He ended up in the Cave of Adullam as his hiding place. During his time in the cave he wrote three of the Psalms — Psalm 34, 57, and 142. The down and outs joined him in the cave. They became known as David's Mighty Men.

God often gave the leader treasures in darkness. *"I will give you the treasures of darkness and hidden riches of secret places, that you may know that I, the Lord, Who calls you by your name, am the God of Israel"* (Isa 45:3). I recall God doing this in my own life in the mid-nineties. I was in a time of isolation from a difficult season. I began to reflect on what I was learning in that season that resulted in my writing a devotional series entitled [TGIF Today God Is First](#). That devotional is now read in 105 nations around the world. Recently I wrote another book during a time of isolation that is just now being released called [The Hidden Place: One man's journey to freedom](#).

How might God be using this quarantine time in the nations for His purposes? Maybe you are being isolated right now. Perhaps there is a book or a message God is downloading to you right now. I

encourage you to use this time to listen. Allow this mess to download a message from God that might be used for His people at this time as His messenger.

Os Hillman is author of 20 books and the popular devotional [TGIF Today God Is First](#).

His most recent book is [The Hidden Place: One man's journey to freedom](#).

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When “all you unknowingly leaned on has fallen” By Sara Wenger Shenk

When unrelenting stress bears down, freighting every moment with worry,
When it dawns on you that this isn't going to end anytime soon,
When fear that the world you knew has ended clutches your chest,
When overnight you have to reinvent your job, family life, and everyday routines,
When you don't know which public officials or news reports you can trust,
When each day brings ominous new tidings and government orders,
When what seemed like a manageable time-out turns into an unrelenting slog,
When it's not clear whether everything will be okay ever again,
When low-grade desperation turns into panic that life may spin out of control,
When “all you unknowingly leaned on has fallen”,

Remember.

Remember that balance comes with slowing down, taking stock, repositioning one's feet.

Remember there are ways to recover one's footing, on more solid ground.

Remember that it is possible to find a new normal.

Remember there are deep wells you'd forgotten existed.

Remember there are tried and true ways to draw water from those wells.

Remember that all of life is gift: air to breathe, sunlight, daily bread, sleep, water.

Remember what is ultimate: The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases.

So breathe. Deeply. Slowly. Over and over.

Focus on a point of light (candle) or something beautiful (flower, sky, tree, icon).

Breathe thanks for what is given: greening trees, cup of coffee, bed for sleep, roof over your head . . .

Open your hands. Receive what is given with thanksgiving.

Remember how Jesus, on receiving five small loaves and two small fish, gave thanks.

Remember how by sharing what was given, all were fed.

Learn how thanksgiving for what is given shifts your focus away from loss—toward possibility.

Discover the new normal that grows from small things—received with thanksgiving.

Rediscover that God's mercies never come to an end. They are new every morning. (Lamentations 3:22)