

# Editorial: Three qualities for fighting pandemic fatigue

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As tempting as it is to give in to pandemic fatigue—whether that be despair in one direction or throwing caution to the wind in the other—we must resist and keep our heads in the game. As COVID-19 infections and hospitalizations continue to surge, it doesn't matter what we think about the pandemic or news about it. We must take up courage, creativity and compassion.

For those who follow Jesus, these three—courage, creativity and compassion—are not something we manufacture or pull out of thin air. They are modeled for us in his life and breathed into us by his Spirit. We just need to take them up.

## Where we are now

One year ago, we wouldn't be having this conversation. We wouldn't be talking about how much longer we will have to wear masks—if we're even wearing masks. We wouldn't be wondering how much longer we're going to be expected to stay six feet away from each other—if we're even keeping our distance.

But we're having this conversation now.

We've already lived through a proverbial 40 days—closer to 300, but who's counting—and we've just about had it. Which makes me wonder how the Israelites lasted 40 *years* in the wilderness. Could we handle even two?

If we're going to weather our version of the wilderness well, we will need

more fortitude. By more fortitude, I mean we will need to put our common need in front of our preferences and politics. People in need, as we are, don't have the luxury of dividing, sniping, undermining—the self-sabotage that all too much of our deliberations have devolved into.

We still have a ways to go. COVID-19 and all that follow in its wake aren't gone. We need to take up courage, creativity and compassion.

## **Things that make us weary**

Maybe the best some of us can do is “fake it 'til we make it” and just play along. Toward the end of last year, we might have played along for a while—though many weren't about to do that much—because vaccines were coming. Now, vaccines are here. Many have been vaccinated, yet distribution of the vaccine has not been as smooth or as quick as hoped.

Meanwhile, a new variant of the coronavirus with a name that looks more like a software update—B.1.1.7—has emerged that is between [40-70 percent more infectious](#) than the plain ol' COVID-19.

My pastor recently lost his uncle to COVID-19. We just published news about a [former Texas Baptist pastor](#) dying of complications from COVID-19. As of this writing, two people loved by Texas Baptists have been taken to the hospital with COVID-19, one with COVID-19 pneumonia.

Just reading the last three paragraphs is enough to give a person pandemic fatigue. But we're not just reading paragraphs; we're living them. For these days, we need to take up courage, creativity and compassion.

## **What we need for where we are**

Pandemic fatigue has led some to the depths of depression, to despair. Those among us in the belly of the whale need others of us not to sink, but

to take up the courage to meet them in the depths. We can't meet them there without looking reality square in the face, accepting it for what it is and following in the footsteps of Jesus, refusing to be overcome.

Others of us have become fed up with mask wearing, physical distancing and other measures to slow the spread of COVID-19. For many, this new way of living has simply overwhelmed and driven them to "return to normal"—the ways things were a year ago. But if "normal" got us where we are now, we definitely need to discover a better way. Surely, the Word who was in the beginning and "through whom all things were made" is our source for such creativity.

And then there are the hundreds of thousands among us who simply need our compassion. They have lost loved ones. They are watching, waiting, praying, agonizing as loved ones suffer. They are enduring the lingering effects of the virus. They don't need us to argue, divide, undermine or attack. They need our compassion, and because we also are stretched thin, we're going to need to go to Jesus' well.

After 40 years in the wilderness, when the Israelites were on the doorstep of the long-awaited land of promise, a difficult reality still lay ahead. There was a lot of work on the other side of the river.

We may be at the river, or we may be at a river before the river. We may have just one barrier to cross to be in the place of promise, or we may be out in the wilderness still, standing in front a of rock with a staff in our hand. Wherever we are, we need to listen to the voice of the Lord and obey. Yes, that takes faith, and some courage, creativity and compassion.

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