

# New Normal: Personal Renewal in Pandemic

2019-03-22 by Ben Deaver at Tallgrass Church on Jeremiah 17:7-8

## Welcome on Facebook Live and welcome on Zoom!

- Zoom 101
  - Find the “Mute/Unmute” button
  - Find the “Chat” button. You can send messages to Everyone or to individuals. Use it!
  - Toggle between “Speaker View” and “Gallery View”
  - Find out how to “Raise hand”
- I’ll mute everyone and then you’ll be able to unmute yourself so you can read a passage or quote this morning.
- I’ll stick around after our official Digital (Central) Gathering to catch up with folks who would like to chat more. This would be a great time for you to share reflections you’ve had this past week. So, I invite you all to stick around and mingle after our time together this morning!
  - We can also chat practical ways to love our neighbors after our Central Gathering.
- Let me get *Discovering God* to you during this season!

## Welcome Miss Elisha Hillegeist, our Sprouts Coordinator!

- The kids call her Miss Elisha even though she’s technically Mrs. Elisha since she is married.
- After Miss Elisha shares her lesson we’ll have a few minutes to allow parents to get kids setup before we I give this morning’s message.

## Questions:

- What would you look back on this time and regret if you didn’t do? Or you did do?
  - Not establish that daily habit you’ve been meaning to
  - Play video games or watch Netflix the whole time
  - Not deepen your marriage
  - Not engage well with your kids
  - What are your intentions for this time?
- Who are you on the worst day of your life?
  - Have the habits in your life prepared you to be your best when your circumstances are their worst?

## New Normal: Personal Renewal in Pandemic

- We're pressing pause on our Acts teaching series and focus in on a new series called *New Normal: Personal Renewal in Pandemic*. We're convinced that God is inviting us into something new and profound through this unique season: personal renewal!
- We don't want to just get through this pandemic so we can get back to business as usual. No, we want to be fundamentally and divinely changed such that we never go back to where we were, but move forward into something new and better together.
- Somewhere that none of us have ever been before. Somewhere wild and real where God is at work in power making everything new in our city and nation. We want nothing short of a revival in our land!
- But history teaches us that, invariably, corporate renewal begins with personal renewal. And this current season of disruption could be just that divine invitation for each of us into real personal renewal. We believe it is!

- So we're going to slow way down over the next few weeks to lean into this together, focusing specifically on rediscovering and reclaiming personal habits and practices that have proven from generation to generation to lead us each into personal renewal, growth, and vital connection with God Himself.
- Jeremiah 17:7-8 likens this kind of personal renewal to a tree whose roots go deep so that it grows strong and is able to withstand the heat and drought when it comes-- not just for its own life, but so that it can continue to produce fruit for the blessing of others, even in the midst of difficulty and stress when most trees draw inward and go into survival mode. That could be you. That could be us.

**Jeremiah 17:7-8** <sup>7</sup>“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. <sup>8</sup>He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit.”

## Have Dave Geldart PRAY!!!

- *What do we learn about the person who trusts in the Lord from this passage?*
  - Just list off descriptions of this person. Unmute yourself, say your name, share your comment, then mute yourself.
- Connection with your Creator is most important to live the abundant life. Many of the classic spiritual disciplines are helpful for anyone, even those who don't believe in and follow Jesus. There's great research demonstrating the usefulness of many of these practices. But we are connecting them to the supernatural, to our lives with God and His desire for us to walk in the good works that He has prepared for us to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). This is the fruit.
- ESV—Pestilence, Sword, and Famine (Christian Standard Bible—Plague, War, and Famine)
- We're experiencing a global pestilence that has caught everyone's attention. It's not the only pandemic we face together, but it's the one that everyone is currently aware of.
- Now is a great time to be the best you possible.
- Now is a very important time to invest in the health of the tree, the tree that is YOU. Invest in your:
  - Physical health
  - Mental health
  - Relational health
  - Spiritual health
- Now is a great time to send your roots deep. Send your roots deep...even in the seemingly small and quiet ways. Now is the time to go deep as a church so that when God leads us we can go wide with His authority and with strength to weather any storm TOGETHER!

## Renewal and Remnant in the Upside Down Kingdom of God

- We've been talking about renewal and remnant!
  - Cultural, Church, and Personal Renewal
  - Begins with a remnant. Begins with a person. Begins with YOU!!!
- **Luke 13:18-19**
  - <sup>18</sup>He said therefore, “What is the **upside down** kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it?
  - <sup>19</sup>It is like a grain of mustard seed, **the smallest of all seeds (Matt. 13:32)**, that a man took and sowed in his garden, and it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches.”
- There are principles here about the Kingdom of God.
  - Things start small.
  - The end game is to bless others. Love others. Serve others. Bear fruit for others. Provide safety and shelter for others. Sacrificial, self-giving love is the goal of the Kingdom of God...and that's most clearly demonstrated in the death of Christ.
  - **John 12:24** Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.

- Not only does this tree remain green, able to provide for it's own growth needs but it also bears fruit, providing for the growth needs of others!
  - ANALOGY: Oxygen mask
- **Galatians 5:22-23** <sup>22</sup> But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, <sup>23</sup> gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.
- Form and Fire—We need both form AND fire.
  - We need to address the cultural malaise/lethargy/fatigue/cynicism/weariness.
  - We need healthy habits to support us so we can bear fruit.

## Set a S.M.A.R.T. goal TODAY!

- Pick a new habit you'd like to form, no matter how small, as long as it's healthy. Run an experiment during COVID-19. See if you can form a new healthy habit and reflect on the process while you're doing it.
- SMART Goals
  - Specific—Not read more of my Bible. But read a Psalm a day.
  - Measurable—Something you can control.
  - Achievable
  - Realistic—Not read the New Testament in the next month but read a chapter a day.
  - Timely—Not do Advent with my family...next December. But pray 5 minutes a day starting TODAY!
- What are some examples of daily SMART Goals? Type them in the comments or on the Facebook Live feed!
- Examples:
  - Take your vitamins
  - Drink half a gallon of water
  - Go to bed by 10:30pm
  - No screens 30 minutes before bed
  - Breathing exercise three times a day
  - Read a chapter of the Bible in the morning
  - 5 minutes of focused prayer (set the timer)
  - 20 second hug with your spouse (set the timer)
  - Pray with your kids at night
- You may be wanting to ask me, "Ben, will you please help me establish some healthy daily habits?" My answer to you is a resounding, "Yes, I would love to help you!"
- The idea of a challenge came up in our LIFE Group on Wednesday. I've been pondering this all week...and much longer before that...
- Anyone grow up Baptist and get gold stars for things?
- Not a time to fear legalism but battle against lethargy. Satan works diligently in both.
- After much neurological research on habit forming I have caved and am now advocating for an app that is very much like a video game!
- So, "Please join me in the world of Habitica and join my Party and join my Challenge!"

## Habitica COVID-19 Challenge

- Habitica: Gamify your life!
- Challenge of Very Important Disciplines for 19 Days!
- I've invited most of you to my Party called Tallgrass Church already.
- You need to create an account on Habitica.
- Choose a username that so we can recognize that it's YOU. You don't have to use your last name if you don't want to though.
- Set up your avatar.
- Accept my Invitation to join the Party Tallgrass Church.
- Then you can Join my Challenge called COVID-19 Challenge.

- This challenge will start TOMORROW.
- In the meantime, get your avatar set up and explore setting your own dailies and habits.
- I'll be available via Zoom again today at 4:00pm for any who need help with this or would like to offer ideas to add to the Challenge. This is an experiment for ME and for our COMMUNITY so please be patient.
- Not sure if this will resonate with everyone or not.
- Dailies—things you perform daily:
  - Read a Psalm—Start with Psalm 1 and go from there if you want clear direction! Or read any Psalm. You choose.
  - Pray for 5 minutes—Use the prayer requests sent out from our Tallgrass Prayer time. Or do some contemplative prayer. Or pray through ACTS (adoration, confession, thanksgiving, supplication). How do you like to pray? Just pray!
  - No screens 30 minutes before bed—Focus on good things before bed! Let Philippians 4:8 be your guide: Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.
  - Gratitude Journal—Write down three specific things you're thankful for today. Over time, you'll become happier! Want proof? Go listen to Ben's talk "Don't Worry, Be Happy...By Thanksgiving" from November 24, 2019 at tallgrass.church.
- Habits:
  - Send an encouraging text—Send an encouraging text to someone in our church or someone who's not in our church. Just practice encouragement!
  - Memorize a Bible verse— This could be from any of the Scripture memory cards connected to our New Normal sermon series. Or pick a verse that's meaningful to you. However, this needs to be a new verse that you've memorized, not one that you already have stored in your heart!
  - Engage in LIFE Group via Zoom— Engage with a small community of people who are trying to help one another along on their spiritual journeys!
  - Participate in Tallgrass Prayer—Join us Tuesday morning from 6:30-7:30am via Zoom!
  - Attend Central Gathering via Zoom—Join us for our Sunday morning Digital (Central) Gathering via Zoom!
  - Fast from food for a 12-hour period—Take a step towards fasting to clear space to connect more deeply with God and pay attention to what's in your soul. Be sure to drink lots of water during this time.
  - Fast from your phone for a 4-hour period—Take a break from your phone to clear space to connect more deeply with God. Pay attention to how you respond to this time.

## New Normal Scripture Memory Cards

### Battle Fear & Anxiety

- **2 Timothy 1:7** ...for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.
- **Philippians 4:6-7** <sup>6</sup>do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <sup>7</sup>And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.
- **1 Peter 5:6-7** <sup>6</sup>Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, <sup>7</sup>casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.
- **Isaiah 26:3-4** <sup>3</sup>You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you.<sup>4</sup>Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting rock.
- **Psalms 71:3** Be to me a rock of refuge, to which I may continually come; you have given the command to save me, for you are my rock and my fortress.

## Trusting the Way Maker

- **Exodus 14:13-14** <sup>13</sup> And Moses said to the people, “Fear not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again. <sup>14</sup> The LORD will fight for you, and you have only to be silent.”
- **2 Chronicles 20:12** “O our God, will you not execute judgment on them? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you.”
- **Isaiah 43:19** Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.
- **Psalms 16:11** You make known to me the path of life; in your presence there is fullness of joy; at your right hand are pleasures forevermore.
- **Psalms 31:3** For you are my rock and my fortress; and for your name's sake you lead me and guide me...

## Jesus as My Shepherd

- **Psalms 23:1-3** The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. <sup>2</sup> He makes me lie down in green pastures. He leads me beside still waters. <sup>3</sup> He restores my soul. He leads me in paths of righteousness for his name's sake.
- **Psalms 79:13** But we your people, the sheep of your pasture, will give thanks to you forever; from generation to generation we will recount your praise.
- **1 Peter 2:24-25** <sup>24</sup> He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed. <sup>25</sup> For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.

## Resources:

- *Reclaiming Spiritual Disciplines* sermon series from 2015—Under *Teachings* and *Old Teachings from New Hope*— <https://tallgrass.church/teachings/series/old-teachings-from-new-hope-church>
- *Tallgrass Strong*—August 25, 2019—<https://tallgrass.church/teachings/2019/08/25/tallgrass-strong>

## Reflection Questions:

- What is your S.M.A.R.T. goal that you'll start TODAY?
- What would you look back on this time and regret if you didn't do? Or you did do?
- Do you need form or fire or both? How will you get this?
- What daily habit do you want to establish in this season?
- What weekly habit do you want to establish in this season?
- What big goal do you have for your life? What small habit could help you reach that goal?

## New Normal Game plan:

- 3/29 Fasting
- 4/5 Scripture
- 4/12 Easter
- 4/19 Prayer

## Intercessions:

- From The Church of England Coronavirus (COVID-19) liturgy and prayer resources
- <https://www.churchofengland.org/more/media-centre/coronavirus-covid-19-liturgy-and-prayer-resources>
- Someone can unmute themselves. Read the unbolded text. And then we'll all read the bolded text but keep ourselves muted.

Let us pray to God,  
who alone makes us dwell in safety:

For all who are affected by coronavirus,  
through illness or isolation or anxiety,  
that they may find relief and recovery:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For those who are guiding our nation at this time,  
and shaping national policies,  
that they may make wise decisions:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For doctors, nurses and medical researchers,  
that through their skill and insights  
many will be restored to health:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

For the vulnerable and the fearful,  
for the gravely ill and the dying,  
that they may know your comfort and peace:  
Lord, hear us,  
**Lord, graciously hear us.**

We commend ourselves, and all for whom we pray,  
to the mercy and protection of God.  
Merciful Father,  
**accept these prayers  
for the sake of your Son,  
our Savior Jesus Christ.  
Amen.**