

# Isolation and Temptations during Crisis

During this coronavirus pandemic, I attempted to encourage you with two posts: Caring and Connecting during Crisis and Pray to Find Peace during Crisis. But now, I must provide a warning.

No, it is not another message about the need to wash your hands more or why you must practice social distancing to minimize the spread of the coronavirus.

This is a warning about giving in to the temptations that can come from being isolated and alone.

## **Distancing; not Isolation and Separation**

Due to the COVID-19 virus, so many of us are working from home, staying away from family and neighbors, and distancing ourselves to help “flatten the curve”. We’re missing the fellowship of our social gatherings and small groups. We aren’t getting the weekly encouragement in live worship services. We are missing the promises in God’s Word about the forgiveness of our sins and the sharing of Communion.

However, there is an old saying, “No man is an island” which rings true today as we all struggle to “isolate” ourselves or “physically distance” (the new term from the World Health Organization, which implores us to not lose our “social” connections with each other).

This was best summed up by a statement from a podcast I heard this past week: **“Social distancing should not mean social isolation.”**

When we become physically or socially isolated, we are also vulnerable to numerous temptations such as self-medicating, slothfulness, and pornography.

Our isolation leaves us separated from God and vulnerable to be hunted!

## **The Prowling Lion is Hunting**

There are many stories about how lions hunt their prey, which is typically done in a group (also called a “pride”). Their strategy is all about isolating the potential meal from their own herd so if the pride can remove just a single animal, then dinner is easily caught, even if the hunted animal is larger or faster than the lions themselves.



Image by Dariusz Labuda from Pixabay

Like the lion's prey, when men isolate ourselves, we are vulnerable.

First Peter 5:8 puts it this way, *"Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour."*

During times of stress and isolation, even the most disciplined men seek to meet their own desires and reject their natural judgment to stay connected to their herd. We become oblivious to the threat. But it is there and it is real.

## **The First Problem Was Not Sin but Isolation**

Along each step as God created the world, He pronounced that everything was "good." But once he created Adam, there is a statement that something was NOT good: *"It is not good that*

*the man should be alone” (Gen. 2:18).*

Adam was not yet complete. He was all alone. He was isolated. He needed community so God gave him someone to watch his back: Eve.



Photo by Erik Nielsen on Unsplash

Later in the Garden of Eden, we see how isolation led to the fall of all mankind.

In Genesis 3:2-5, the serpent, who was lurking in the grass for a while, sees his opportunity to deceive God’s children and moves in for the kill.

Genesis 3:6 tells us that Adam was nearby but Eve processed the information from Satan and made the decision all on her

own.

Satan hunted Eve by waiting for the moment when she was alone. When she was isolated.

Would things have turned out differently if Eve had said, "Let me talk to my husband about this," before taking a bite of that rotten fruit? Certainly!

God had given Eve a double-layered safety net with Adam, but Eve's isolation set her to sin. Then their shame led to even deeper isolation and sinfulness that carries forward to all of us today.

## **Temptations During Isolation**

I believe isolation makes it very easy to be tempted by three particular sins: self-medicating, slothfulness, and pornography.

### **Self-Medicating**

As feelings of anxiety, depression, or sheer boredom mount during the COVID-19 pandemic, the desire to turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism becomes problematic.



Image from Pixabay

According to this article on Healthline, experts warn against self-medicating with alcohol, marijuana, or prescription drugs during stressful times because those lead to additional problems.

Marijuana and other inhaled substances including cigarettes, e-cigarettes or vaping are acutely dangerous since they stress the pulmonary system. Alcohol abuse and misused prescriptions also affect the general health of your body, leading to poor sleep and a weakened immune system.

## **Slothfulness**



According to Wikipedia, Sloths are arboreal mammals noted for

slowness of movement and hanging upside down in the trees of the tropical rain forests of South America and Central America. Sloths spend most of their time sleeping and eating. Sloths are solitary creatures that rarely interact with one another outside of breeding season.

So you see the parallel to a slothful human and the sin of laziness that comes in isolation?

King Solomon also writes *“Slothfulness casts into a deep sleep, and an idle person will suffer hunger”* (Prov 19:15).

Of course, the opposite is to pour yourself into work to pass the extra time at home.

Personally, I needed to “up my game” and exercise more during this time. Our dog is getting 2 to 3 walks a day and I’ve started a new home workout routine. These keep me from being idle.

Another suggestion is to get away from screens earlier in the evening and just read a book. Stopping the use of our cell phone, TVs, and iPad before 9:00 pm will help you get good, quality sleep so you are not tired the next day and needing a mid-day nap.

Taking care of yourself physically helps overcome slothfulness.

**Pornography**

Today's mobile phones and hi-speed Internet make it very easy to access pornography. I will write more about this temptation soon but here are some sobering findings on pornography usage from a survey of 8,000 readers by the website, Desiring God:



Chained to pornography

- Nearly 50% of self-professing Christian men, ages 18–29, acknowledged the ongoing use of porn.
- Porn use is more than 15% of Christian men over age sixty, over 20% for men in their fifties, 25% for men in their forties, and 30% for men in their thirties.
- The survey found a similar trend among women, but in lesser proportions: 10% of females, ages 18–29; 5% in their thirties; increasingly less for forties, fifties, and sixty-plus.

## **Call a God Buddy When You're Tempted**

Like Adam and Eve, we also need a double-layered safety net. It is your God Buddy.

Ecclesiastes 4:9-10 *"Two people are better off than one, for*



*they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."*

So whenever you are feeling isolated— regardless of whether it's during a pandemic or any other crisis afterward, please do not go it alone. It is way too easy to give in to temptation when you are distanced.

There's wisdom in an old adage, "You are only as healthy as your secrets."

So let your God Buddy know about your secrets to help keep you accountable. Also, come out of the darkness of isolation and step up your game with God with increased prayer and worship. Both will help you through any of these temptations.