



INTRODUCTION



I want God to stop the coronavirus *immediately*. I'm worried for myself and especially for all the people I love and care about. I pray for God to protect me, my family, and everyone everywhere. But as the numbers of sick and dying keep increasing, so does my anxiety.

What if God doesn't help? Already, a half a million people have died. Given our experience so far, is it even reasonable to expect that God will do *anything* in midst of this COVID-19, global crisis? If so, what?

Spiritually, many of us are at the "Help me, God!" stage. We're reaching out to God for whatever help we can get. Others of us are wrestling with profound theological questions right now as well: "Where is God? Does God care about our suffering? Why doesn't God do more to help? If God won't stop the onslaught, what can we expect from God?"

These questions have been and continue to be very

relevant to me, personally. Ever since our first child died in a miscarriage; my mother began a long, debilitating, losing battle with Alzheimer's disease; and I learned that I contracted a terminal disease the day after my first son was born, I have been asking more and more questions like these. Bottom line, I simply want to know, "Can I trust God? And if so, for what?"

I feel the urgency of these questions more in times of crisis, but ask them regularly in Myanmar, where I serve six months a year, where human suffering is so visible to me every day. In fact, the questions are always with me, because there are no answers that fully satisfy me intellectually or that completely assuage my grief and angst. There is so much we wish we understood about God, but just can't. Yet, what we believe and how we act on our faith still makes a huge difference in our ability to cope with adversity and an uncertain future.

In the following seven essays, I will be talking about seven spiritual truths for trusting God in troubled times. In the conclusion, I will share a very personal story of when I almost lost my faith in God.

1. Remember your limited ability to understand the will and ways of God. Take whatever God offers.
2. Expect God to be at work in your life, leading and guiding you.
3. Expect God to strengthen your faith, build your character, and restore your hope through your suffering.

4. Expect to share in Christ's sufferings. Expect to share in his glory.
5. Remember—nothing can separate you from the love of God.
6. Expect more peace, as you put your anxieties in God's capable hands.
7. Expect to be renewed, as you accept your limitations and wait on God.

This series of essays does not attempt to answer all the questions any of us might have right now about human suffering. Instead, they offer spiritual truths that so many have found helpful in any and all times of crisis and distress. They are insights that grow out of the Bible and have been validated in my own experience and by the experience of millions of Christians over the years. They are true because of how they have qualitatively improved the minds, hearts, and lives of those who believe and live by them. As you read and reflect on each one, may God comfort and strengthen you in whatever ways you most need right now.

What are you expecting from God?