

COVID-19

Good morning, church family. As I write this, I am sitting on my front porch listening to the sounds of a world waking up without the concerns of viruses, stock markets, or other potential tragedies. The birds are continuing to sing because they know something that all of us MUST take to heart: God is in control. We rest in His hands, and they are loving hands.

With that said, I felt the need to update you on our response to COVID-19. We are blessed in the state of Alabama because we don't have any reported cases in our state. As of this morning, Alabama is once again in the Final Four – states without any reported cases. Sorry, I couldn't help myself. None of us is naïve enough to believe that it isn't here – it probably is – but obviously we have been spared the worst for now. That means at this time, there is no need to make any changes to our schedule of activities. Our preschool and

children's departments are making sure that every area is sanitized before each service. So parents, please know that we will do everything we can to keep your babies safe. Keep in mind that we do have two worship services, so you can spread out in the pews, especially at the 8 a.m. service.

However, we do need to change some of our behaviors. As the experts have said, we need to wash our hands often, keep our hands to ourselves (I spoke to a doctor yesterday who said fist-bumps are as bad as handshakes), and use our common sense. That means if you have health issues, you may want to self-quarantine for a while. Understand, that doesn't mean skip church but continue to go to Wal-Mart J. It does mean if you are uncomfortable with being in crowds, stay home. The good news is that you can watch our services online on FaceBook or from our website. If things continue to progress and we

have to cancel services, I promise to continue to preach and teach online during our regular service times. I would encourage some of our Sunday School teachers to learn how to use FaceBook Live (you can do it from home) and do the same. Your church staff will be available to show you how to do that. And keep in mind that your church still has bills to pay during this time, so please be faithful. You can give online, and we can show you how to set that up as well.

I also want to make another promise to you. To the best of my ability, I will always be willing to minister to you, and I know that many of our church leaders will do the same. So during this time, if you need ANYTHING, we will be available to you. However, our hospitals and nursing homes have already started restricting access to patients. Some of the hospitals have said “no visitors” at all while others are only allowing family members. Most of them have

said that in “life-or-death” situations that clergy will be allowed to minister. You cannot imagine how hard that is for your pastor and staff, but please know that we will be praying for you, checking on you by telephone, and doing what we can. But we will not be allowed to visit you from this point forward until this coronavirus scare passes.

Finally, our Southern Baptist Convention has issued a call to prayer this Sunday, March 15. We will be joining with our convention churches to do just that. Following is the statement issued by our SBC leaders:

In light of the coronavirus (COVID-19) global pandemic, we are asking all Southern Baptists and our 47,500+ churches of the Southern Baptist Convention to commit to a dedicated time of prayer this Sunday, March 15, 2020, to seek the Lord in unity about these matters:

1. Ask God, in His mercy, to stop this pandemic and save lives -- not only in our communities but around the world, particularly in places that are unequipped medically to deal with the virus. (Isaiah 59:1-2)

2. Pray for President Donald Trump and other government leaders -- international, federal, state, and local -- to have the wisdom to direct us in the best courses of action for prevention and care. (Romans 13:1–4)

Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President and CEO Ronnie Floyd joined other SBC leaders today (March 12) in calling Southern Baptists to a day of prayer for this Sunday (March 15).

3. Scripture says: Teach us to number our days carefully so that we may develop wisdom in our hearts. Pray that the Lord will give us wisdom in this moment of fear as the

foundations of what we know are shaken, that others would realize how fragile life is and how real eternity is, and they would see their need to turn to God. (Psalm 90:12)

4. Ask God to protect our missionaries and their families around the globe, using this global crisis to advance His Good News to the whole world. (Mark 16:15)

(End of SBC Call to Prayer)

Please know this. God has got this. It hasn't taken Him by surprise at all, and I trust Him to see us through. So, with all of that, see you at the Missions Fair in the morning and at church on Sunday!

Bro. Ben