A SURVIVAL GUIDE FOR THE CURRENT VIRUS CRISIS



FRANK VIOLA

A Survival Guide for the Current Virus Crisis

Building a 3D Immune System

Frank Viola

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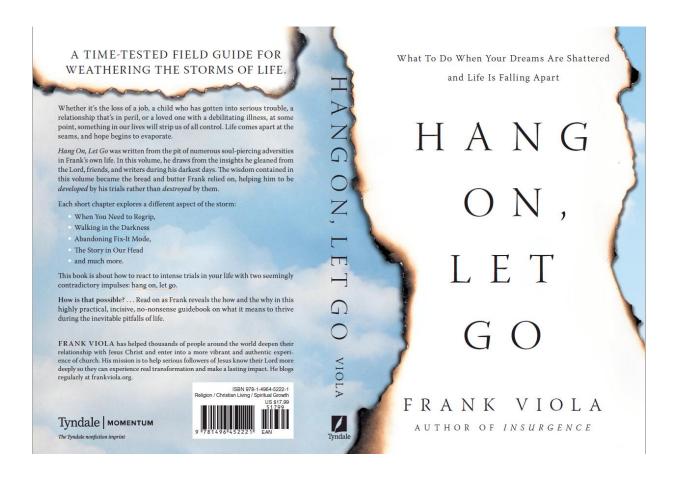
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For more, check out Frank's new book – HangOnLetGo.com – which teaches you how to survive any kind of crisis – relational, health, and/or financial.



Introduction

This eBook is a survival guide for handling the present virus crisis.

Consider it a manual for building a 3D immune system: spiritual, mental/emotional, and physical.

Okay, that's technically 4, but I want to use "3D" and mind/emotion go together.

So calm down.

The guide contains 16 articles I've written on my blog over the years. Most of the recent ones went "viral" (pun well intended) and there was a strong request to put them all in one space for ease of reading and sharing.

If you've ever written a book or a lengthy article, you know the tremendous effort in time, energy, and emotional labor that it requires. For this reason, authors and writers get paid for their work.

Not much (we aren't called "starving authors" for nothin'). But the one who labors is worthy of his hire, so said the greatest Author of all.

Even so, I'm offering this guide for FREE.

I'm not even asking for a donation (quiet applause please).

All I ask is one thing. That if you find it helpful. On any level. (That means, even if something in it makes you laugh – which is really needed during hard times), then please share this page with others.

Just give them the link: frankviola.org/survival

Oh, and my gentle suggestion.

Say something like, "Go read Viola's survival guide for the virus crisis NOW. It's just incredible, unprecedented, amazing, tremendous, flawless, the likes of which this world has never seen" (you know, stuff the current US president likes to say).

That's it.

Nothing more.

Read it and share the link if you get something out of it: frankviola.org/survival

Thanks in advance.

(Oh, and if you don't share it, my team will know and stalk you on social media.)

Seriously though, enjoy the guide.

Note that the informal formatting of the original blog posts (which were first emails) has been retained.

P.S. I will say more about the crisis in the days to come, so <u>make sure you're subscribed to my</u> <u>email list</u> so you don't miss the rest.

A Virus Vaccination (Wash Hands for 20 Seconds Before Reading)

CALMNESS ALERT: This chapter has been disinfected with Clorox wipes. So it's well sanitized.

(It was also written before vaccines were created for COVID, but the content is still fully applicable.)

I consider this chapter to be a "vaccine" for the virus (metaphorically, of course) – both a spiritual vaccine and a physical vaccine.

The chapter is broken up into 4 parts. I encourage you to take your ADHD medication and read them all. Each part is important.

Oh, and for the both of you who read the whole thing, you'll get a free carton of toilet paper shipped to your door. (Okay, you probably won't, but you SHOULD read it all anyway.)

You've got nothing better to do since you're probably on solitary confinement like most of us, so I hope you'll read every word, consume the supplemental audios, and spread them to others ... like a virus.

Fasten your seat belt. Here we go ...

PART 1: A PERSONAL WORD

Based on what I know about COVID-19, which is insidious, I believe strongly in the current social distancing prescription. My pets have taught me a few things about it by contrast and comparison.

My cat has been engaging in social distancing since she first breathed oxygen. In fact, she has a PhD in it. My dog, on the other hand, is incapable of social distancing for 3 minutes.

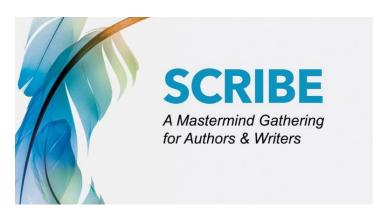
The virus is starting to hit home. I have friends who caught it. Thankfully, they are all on the mend. But I have friends of friends who are no longer with us because of it. And that number is increasing daily.

Since I've been working from home for many years (thank you, Lord), the self-quarantine isn't as dramatic a change as it is for many of you.

But I'll shamelessly admit that I do miss having an occasional eggs over easy with bacon at the local diner. Grabbing an Oreo milkshake at Denny's. Taking my wife out to dinner. And spending in-person time with family and friends.

In addition, in 2020, we were forced to cancel my annual author's training – SCRIBE.

(For those of you who wanted to attend but couldn't, SCRIBE is now available online. Go here for details. It opens twice a year for registration.)



PART 2: THE PROBLEM

I've never paid much attention to my Facebook feed. But in the wake of the coronavirus, I wanted to see how my beloved FB friends (most of whom I don't know from Eve) have been reacting. And I've noticed a pattern.

- There are those who think the whole thing has been blown WAY out of proportion.
 "Back to your homes, Citizens. (And leave them whenever you want.) There's nothing to see here."
- There are others who have launched the panic nukes, equating the virus with Armageddon.
- A horrifying number of the latter group have imbibed and happily spread Crazy-Town,
 Looney-Bird conspiracy theories. I won't rehearse them, but many are just as believable
 as the idea that the virus was concocted by Jim Morrison with the help of Tupac Shakur
 in a Breaking Bad lab owned by John Lennon and Michael Jackson. Alas, every time
 there's a national or international crisis, the Cereal Christians (the flakes, fruits, and
 nuts) come out of the woodwork in droves and spew absolute nonsense all over social
 media. We've all seen this movie before, but I'll have more to say about conspiracy
 theories in the next chapter.
- Regrettably, I've only seen a handful of people talking about the gospel of the kingdom and the Insurgence on their Facebook feeds an opportune time to do just that since it's SO VERY relevant right now. As I've noted before, whenever I discuss the Insurgence on Facebook, the visibility of the updates are not much better than spotting a golf ball in Niagara Falls. Perhaps your mileage is different.

Anyways, the reality of this virus stands somewhere between the "this is no big deal" impulse and the "Jesus is coming back next month" impulse. Many Christians default to one or the other.

Five big problems.

- 1. The virus is real, it's deadly, and it's highly contagious.
- 2. Many people still aren't taking it seriously, thus why it continues to spread. This changes when you know someone dies from it.
- 3. It's particularly sinister because it's airborne. And yes, it's killing people and causing others long-term damage.
- 4. One reason why the seriousness of this virus is so hard to accept is because most of us have difficulty wrapping our brains around the concept of exponential growth. Plus many today people don't trust the media even if it's valid.
- 5. Now (beginning in 2021) there are more dangerous and contagious variants of the virus. And no one can predict when it will end.

PART 3: A SPIRITUAL VACCINE

- Whenever things are going to pieces, it's critical to lean hard on those things that never change. Like Jesus Himself, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever (Hebrews 13:8).
- Psalm 23 remixed: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of virus, I will fear no evil. Why? Because you, oh Lord, are with me." Notice we walk through It's not our destination. We don't run through it either. It's a slow process. But we will get through it. It WILL pass, my friends. And we have no reason to fear. Because we have the Greatest Ally in the universe by our side. And He has promised to be with us through everything. Note also shadows are always bigger than the substance. But wherever shadows exist, so does light. Acknowledge the shadow. It's real. But turn toward the light. This is a good time to be conscious of your Lord as much as you can.
- Every crisis is an opportunity to make something new possible. This crisis affords us with opportunities that we may never have again. Find out what those are. (If you're binging on Netflix, Hulu, or Prime, you'll be too distracted to ever consider the question.) Point: Never waste a good crisis. And this one is GREAT.
- One opportunity we have during this time (among many others) while we are stripped from our normal lives and living on what's essentially "house arrest" (Paul, we can now empathize with you), is that it's an opportunity for creativity. We are the most creative when we are free of distraction and noise. We have time to think and imagine. That is, if we resist the urge to think about zombies and the idea that if you forget to wash our hands every 20 minutes or sneeze you'll kill a family member. Creativity thrives when we have few obligations and lots of free time. So there's that.
- This is a time where you can deepen your relationships, not only with Jesus, but with friends and family. When it comes to those closest to us, stress either pushes people apart or it brings them together. You can decide which it will be for you. If your

relationship with your spouse, children, parents, etc. is unhealthy, the present crisis will probably push you further away. But you can change that by working on becoming the best version of yourself with the aid of your Lord and setting your intention. You actually can remain calm, caring, and considerate – and be a more tolerable human being. All of us can.

- Social distancing is PHYSICAL distancing. It's not EMOTIONAL distancing. So pick up the phone and contact your friends and family. Check up on those lost souls you've been praying for. This is a great time to build and strengthen connections.
- Technology can be used for God's intentions right now. Case in point. Those of us who are on The Deeper Christian Life Network are helping one another get through the crisis. That includes sharing resources and even finances. It's a beautiful thing to watch. A remarkable witness for how the body of Christ functions during a crisis. (Just like the ekklesia in Antioch helped the ekklesia in Jerusalem when it was struck by famine.) Oh, and unlike Facebook, there is ZERO blood-letting in our discussion forums.
- Build some new routines in your life. Spiritual, physical, and mental. You know, stuff like beholding the Lord. Reading Scripture (<u>in fresh ways</u>). Journaling. Reading good books. Listening to good podcasts. Exercising. Getting outside in nature (remember that thing called *nature*?). Avoiding meaningless diversions as much as you can.



PART 4: A PHYSICAL VACCINATION

Dallas Willard often said, "Do your best. But don't trust your best. Trust God."

Those words are fitting for the present crisis.

Here are some practical tips that will physically "vaccinize" you against the virus.

- Keep a minimum of 6 feet distance between you those outside your immediate cohabitants.
- Until the pandemic recedes, avoid being in groups.
- There's debate about masks, but current data shows that n95 masks are effective at protecting from the virus if worn correctly.

- Wash your hands often. Use soap and hot water.
- Do all you can to build your immune system, but get educated before you take a supplement. For example, people are overdosing on zinc. Vitamins D and C are effective as immune boosters. There is specific protocol for both prevention and treatment on this page from a credible source: covid19criticalcare.com.
- This is one of the immune boosters I've been using for years: <u>Supreme Fulvic</u>. I call it "the brown dragon."
- Regarding the vaccines, currently the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been effective
 at preventing deaths and hospitalization, much more than if one didn't receive a
 vaccination. However, nothing is 100% effective.
- Beyond all of the above, the ultimate vaccination is Psalm 91.

Looking for work? Here is who's hiring:

- Amazon
- IT companies
- Walmart (some stores for shelving)
- Amazon
- Shipping and delivery companies
- Social media
- Medical/Pharmaceutical
- Remote communications and virtual meeting services
- Amazon (almost forgot to list it)

In the next chapter, we'll deal with the theological significance of the virus from a kingdom perspective. Why is it happening? Where is God in all of it? And what about those never-ending conspiracy theories? What if one of them is actually true? Oh, and how will it affect churches in the long term?

You know, easy softball questions.

Ahem.

<u>SUBSCRIBE to my blog so you don't miss my articles</u>. (Our Thursday articles are known to kill more germs than Listerine.)

Until then, stay safe, stay sane, and keep away from grandma and grandpa.

Your brother,

Frankie V.

P.S. If you're new to my work, <u>check out our podcasts</u>. They have been proven to cure cabin fever.







What God is Doing Through the Present Crisis and Those Screwball Conspiracy Theories

The current virus crisis may prove to be one of the most significant events of our short lives.

I've always been a fan of the movie *Groundhog Day*, but I never imagined I'd be living it for the last few weeks.

How about you?

Each of us will look back on this period and say, "Alas, I wasted a good crisis." Or "That period changed my life for the better." Or "I wish I hadn't sneezed and killed my cat!"

In this chapter, I want to discuss three things.

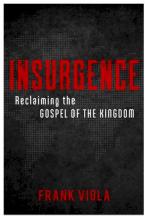
- * How will the crisis affect churches in the long run?
- * What about all of those conspiracy theories moving through social media?
- * Why did God allow this global crisis and what is He seeking to achieve through it?

QUESTION 1: Will this crisis cause the institutional church to change or go away?

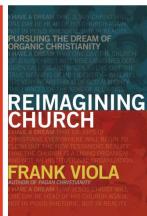
Lots of people are opining that the present crisis will be the end of the institutional church structure. They argue that when the zombie apocalypse is over, churches everywhere will be different.

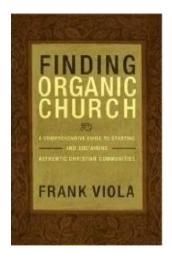
Excuse me while I cough (I'm 6 feet away from you, so you're not in danger of dying). But that's not going to happen.

It was 12 years ago that that George Barna and I published <u>Pagan Christianity</u> and the constructive follow-up <u>Reimagining Church</u>. Both books were followed by the very practical <u>Finding Organic Church</u>.









Those books weren't well received back then by the MCM (Mainstream Christian Media) and that won't change. Even when churches everywhere are on lockjaw, I mean, lockdown.

So no, pastors aren't flocking in droves to get their hands on these books.

That's good actually. Because those books were NEVER written for pastors or for people who enjoy the Sunday morning church service.

Nor were those books advocating the "house church model" (whatever that is) as some wrongly assumed.

I'm not an advocate of either "model." But God will bless both when those in them have been captured by and have received the gospel of the kingdom.

I digress.

Bottom line: The institutional church isn't going anywhere, folks. It will come roaring back when the sixth seal is finally opened and this crisis ends (we're still on seal five, right?). I'm fine with that since I have no dog in that fight.

How much organized churches will suffer depends on how long the current house arrest, I mean, lockdown – continues.

If it continues for many weeks or even months, sure, some churches may lose their buildings. And some pastors may lose their jobs. It's all possible.

But they'll all carry on ... in their houses or wherever else. And church buildings will be back in business.

Just for the record, I'd be surprised if the lockdown lasts past early June. But who knows.

Here's a piece of wisdom. Prepare for the worst. Assume that solitary confinement is going to last 6 months to a year. And prepare your heart and mind accordingly.

I don't think that's going to happen, but it can't hurt to prepare.

Begin using your extra bandwidth and added free time for positive new opportunities. This will keep you from losing your mind.

I still stand by every word of *Pagan Christianity, Reimagining Church,* and *Finding Organic Church*. But it doesn't matter to me the kind of church to which a Jesus-follower belongs.

I'm supremely interested in one thing and one thing alone - the Insurgence. The restoration of the gospel of the kingdom.

That's where my heart beats. That's what motivates me every day.

QUESTION 2: What if one of those absurd conspiracy theories about the coronavirus is actually true?

"Let me be clear" (to quote a previous US president). Let's just say that the coronavirus was a biological weapon gone wrong ... or right. That notion is well within the realm of possibility.

To get closer to the stuff that's floating around social media — maybe Mike Tyson and his tigers really did create the virus in a lab in Mexico. I mean, it IS named after a Mexican beer, right?

Pick your favorite poison, I mean, conspiracy. No matter what it is, if ANY conspiracy theory is true, the following holds:

a) You can't do anything about it. Except pray. And you should be praying anyway. Particularly that God will get what He is after in this crisis and He will reveal to one of His fully devoted children in the research field a cure (the Lord will be sure to get the glory that way).

- b) You will never be able to prove your conspiracy theory, even if it's 100% accurate. (Sending links of videos and/or images is not proof, folks. Neither are "alleged" quotes or "news" stories from spurious sources.)
- c) Most important, it doesn't change the practical recommendations I give you in this book about how to survive and THRIVE during this crisis.

Those recommendations don't move. And they can keep you alive both spiritually and physically. Let alone mentally and emotionally.

The conspiracy theories, no matter how intriguing (or insane), can't do that. They just scratch a peculiar itch, one that never gets satisfied (so the obsessed end up scratching their skin off).

So why burn up your emotional, spiritual, and mental calories on spinning and spreading unproven theories? Most of which make Christians look like their IQs are a tad higher than a carrot.

This is ONE reason why scores of intelligent people in the world don't care what "Christians" have to say about *anything* – including the gospel.

Bertrand Russell famously said, "The fundamental cause of trouble in the world is that the stupid are so confident and the intelligent are so full of doubt."

Why not use that same energy and zeal in fleshing out <u>the gospel of the kingdom</u>, talking about it, and spreading it? You know, like a bad virus.

Think for a moment. If every Christian who's spread a conspiracy theory via text, email, or on social media DID THE SAME THING with the Insurgence — we'd see a first-class revolution, a third "Great Awakening," the likes of which this planet has never seen.

Just sayin'...

The pessimist in me says, "Frank, of course, that's a no-brainer. But Satan will be hosting the Ice Capades in hell before that happens. The vast majority of Christians love their conspiracy theories. They're far sexier than the Insurgence."

QUESTION 3: Why is God allowing this present crisis and what is He doing through it?

It's interesting to me that Americans (in particular) wake up to the world's pain only when it arrives at their doorsteps.

The wars, tsunamis, earthquakes, hurricanes, famines, and floods in other parts of the world that have devastated millions of lives over the last decade never appear on the radar of most Americans.

The same is true for those natural disasters that have decimated lives in other cities in the USA. (If it doesn't happen to *us*, it's like it didn't happen at all.)

But if an American Christian has to stay in his/her home for over a week, the Antichrist is concocting his mark and the world is coming to an end.

Ever since the garden, this world has been cursed with plagues, death, sickness, earthquakes, hurricanes, famines, etc.

This is all part of the corrupt earth in which we live. It's nothing new. It's the way the world has been since the first child ever born killed his sibling.

And it won't change until the Lord Jesus returns and sets all things right (that's what the term "judge the world" means in Scripture, by the way – the restoration of all things. The setting right of everything in the end).

Even creation groans for that moment (read Romans 8 straight through).

God groans as well. He groans with our pain. He laments as we lament.

So what is God doing in this crisis?

What He always seeks to do through any crisis – global, national, or personal: The transformation of His people into His image. And the awakening of lost souls to the kingdom of God.

Not wasting this crisis means you are allowing the crisis to transform you into the image of Jesus. That being interpreted means: *You are becoming a less unbearable human being.* And you are finding the positive new opportunities that this crisis has made possible in your life. (This is also the secret to surviving *Groundhog Day* syndrome.)

Part of this is fixing (or at least improving) your relationship with family and friends.

<u>In Episode #65</u>, a first-rate scholar and I talk about whether we can rightly compare America to ancient Israel. Something many Christians routinely do.

Yep, each episode builds on the previous ones. So you can (should!) binge. You have nothing better to do while on solitary confinement, right?

Oh, and each episode has been carefully disinfected.

I've got more to say about all of this. So I shall see you when the apocalypse is over.

I hope.

Your brother,
Frankie V.

Psalm 115:1

P.S. Since we may be spending more days huddled in our homes, anyone have any great book recommendations? **SO HAPPY YOU INQUIRED ... HERE ARE A FEW** − recently sorted by topic. [©]

Is God Judging the World?

So we're still on global lockdown because some hungry guy in China decided to eat a bat. (Or something like that.) And the rest of us are paying for it.

In the last chapter, I talked about those screwball conspiracy theories that are being splattered all over social media by Christians.

One woman unsubscribed from our email list when she read the chapter in article form on my blog. Not because she disagreed with the article. But she was HIGHLY offended that I used the word "screwball." *

Hey, <u>I never cuss</u> (which makes me rarer than chicken molars today). But I had no idea that the word "screwball" is now offensive. I guess it's okay to say #\$@^%*!, but not "screwball."*

Hmmm...

Anyways, regarding those screwball conspiracy theories, did you hear the one about the new Revelation 13 vaccine? Apparently, it's almost ready to launch, and if you look at it under an authorized edition microscope the numbers 666 appear. But if you use a more contemporary microscope, 616 appears instead. (Let the one who comprehends Greek manuscript diversity understand.)

I was told, "Share with as many people as possible!" So I did. Just wanted to know what it feels like to join the conspiracy train. And having inhaled, I can tell you by first-hand experience that the high is greatly exaggerated.

Like my grandfather used to say, "Conspiracy theories are like swallowing a spiked drink. Fun at first until later when you bemoan all the stupid things you said." (Okay, my grandfather never said that, but let's pretend he did.)

Before I talk about how to handle a first-class crisis and address whether God still judges nations with disasters (like nasty viruses, etc.), here are some things to start and stop during these strange days of solitary confinement:

Start This, Stop That

- * Start preparing your heart to have people you know (or know of) catch the virus. That includes celebrities, politicians, and journalists.
- * Stop hoping that some in the latter two groups die from it.

- * Start getting outside daily and reacquaint yourself with that faithful friend called "Sunshine" (unless you live in the state of Washington where the Sun engages in social distancing all year long). Reports of zombies are pretty thin right now, so you should be safe. And the vitamin D will do your body well.
- * Stop eating ice cream by the carton.
- * Start a new habit called "flossing."
- * Stop forgetting what it was like to wear shoes (you don't want those arches to fall).
- * Start registering for that course you've been waiting to get. You need motivation right now (more on that later).
- * Stop wasting your time watching reruns of *The Office, Friends,* and *Grey's Anatomy*. However, *Seinfeld* is perfectly fine. It will boost your IQ.
- * Start focusing on the positive things in your life rather than the negative (I know that's hard to do when your dog is dying of coronavirus, but work on it).
- * Stop wasting time on Facebook. (If you're on it, how about being one of the .012% of the population and start spreading the Insurgence on your updates?)
- * Start reading great books.
- * Stop binging on video games.
- * Start binging on great podcasts. (You should know 3 of the very best by now!)
- * Stop allowing your impulses to control you. Learn patience with those you're huddled in your house with. If not, you may have a volcano on your hands.

I hope this book has made you laugh (or will make you laugh, because you just started it).

Laughing is good for the soul. Just make sure you don't laugh while drinking liquids. You might give the person (or pet) sitting within 6 feet of you the virus – in addition to an unsolicited spray of whatever you're swigging.

And why do people on TV say "coronavirus" without the article (the). Is that cooler than saying "the coronovirus"?

DOES GOD STILL JUDGE NATIONS

This goes without saying because all of you listen to every episode of **the Insurgence podcast** as soon as each one releases on Tuesdays, right? (Rolls eyes.)

In <u>Episode #64</u>, I speak with the foremost Old Testament scholar in the world (in my humble, but accurate opinion) and we discuss whether God still judges nations, the specific marks of His judgment in the Old Testament, and if the current pandemic is a judgment from God.

Oh, and all <u>new subscribers to my blog</u> will receive 10 boxes of Kleenex mailed to their doorsteps ... (shipping date is April 2027, when they're back in stock).

Yours in Him,

Frankie V.

P.S. Speaking of motivation, some of you have asked how I'm able to produce so much content in such a short time. **My secrets are unveiled here**.

* DICTIONARY:

screw·ball

/'skrooˌbôl/

noun

A crazy or eccentric person.

"She was dating a real screwball"

adjective

crazy; absurd.

"What possessed you to ask a screwball question like that?"

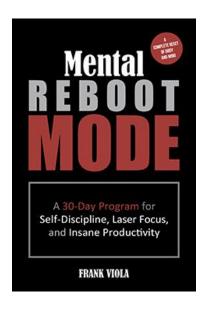
The Real Pandemic (They Don't Want You to Know About)

This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, Hang On, Let Go.

In addition, listen to: Episode #47: Saying Yes to God and Experiencing Joy.

Other tips:

 Include exercise and proper diet into your routine. (Some of you have written me saying that you're doing the Mental Reboot Mode Program with awesome results.)



- When you pray for those sick and hurting, remember our Asian brothers and sisters. As
 crazy as this is, some of them are being mistreated because the virus allegedly came
 from an Asian country. I know this doesn't make any sense, and if you don't personally
 know any hateful racists, it's hard to believe that humans can be so shockingly
 despicable. Nevertheless, I've gotten emails from Asian brethren saying that they are
 having to endure mistreatment right now.
- I talked about this on **Episode #65 of the Insurgence podcast** which deals with whether or not 2 Chronicles 7:14 applies to us today, but agree with me in prayer and ask the Lord to reveal to one of His servants an effective treatment/cure for the virus so He gets the glory.

P.S. For a discussion on how to find contentment, check out **Episode #50: Practical Lessons on Kingdom Living – Part I.**

It's Not the Time to Binge on Netflix

Panic is more contagious than calm.

The more "news" you absorb right now, the more you're inclined to panic.

All you need is 10 minutes a day to get informed. No more.

Not by social media, by the way. Find an informative news source you trust.

Despite what many Christian people are saying, I don't believe the current pandemic is a sign of the end times. I'm not expecting the four horsemen of the Apocalypse to show up anytime soon.

Regardless, Insurgents (kingdom-first seekers) stay calm during crisis because we are learning to live in Psalm 23 and Matthew 6.

We also have the peace of Jesus. Real peace. Something the world lacks.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

~ 2 Timothy 1:7

Also ...

Every crisis gives us an opportunity to make something new possible.

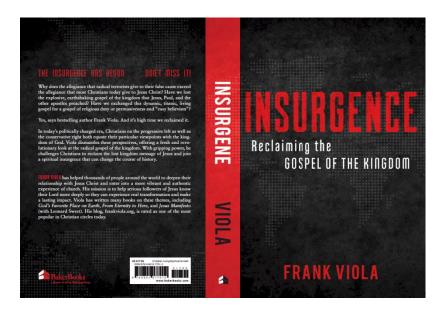
So what does the current virus crisis make possible in your life?

According to my Facebook feed (which I rarely look it), it's an opportunity to binge on Netflix and Prime.

A few things that my fellow Insurgent friends and I are doing instead are:

- (1) We are making this a time to deepen our relationship to Jesus Christ and His kingdom.
- * Personally, I'm spending more time with the Lord. I've also created an "intercession/supplication" list, and I'm regularly reminding the Lord about each item on it. (Incidentally, reminding the Lord of His promises is exemplified all throughout the Bible in a positive way.) Ticking them off as He answers them.

* I'm reading. On this score, many of you are reading (for the first time or you're rereading) Insurgence: Reclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom.



Since many of you are new to this email list, we're again making our 3 bonuses available to all who get a copy of the book.

Here's how it works. After you get your copy from any online store (in any form — audio, kindle, print, etc.), send an email to lnsurgenceBonus@gmail.com and put "I GOT THE BOOK" in the subject line.

If you already have a copy, you can still get the bonuses.

- * Get caught up on the Insurgence podcast and the Christ is All podcast. Much of the content has application for the present crisis.
- * Take an online course. (There are many great courses online. But most of them, in my view, are way overpriced. If interested in what we have to offer, see <a href="mailto:oursecond-cour
- (2) We are spending more time with immediate family.
- (3) We are calling/texting friends and extended family. Checking up on them.
- (4) We are exercising wisdom. Example: Picking up a black widow and calling it "faith" isn't real faith. It's foolishness.
- (5) We are looking to meet the needs of others. Especially those who are part of the family of God.

I'd also recommend spending very little time on Facebook. It's a time vampire and very often a viper pit.

To remain calm and use the current crisis for game-changing opportunities is a paradigm shift compared to what the world is doing right now (along with many "Christians" who've hit the panic button).

We can't control what's happening on the national and international scene. But we can control our reaction to it all.

Here are the words of Martin Luther concerning the Black Plague of his day. They apply well right now.

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." *

^{*} Luther's Works, Volume 43, p. 132 in the letter entitled, "Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague" written to Rev. Dr. John Hess. Hat tip to Justin Farr.

What the Virus Crisis Exposes and How Insurgents React

Resist the temptation to call on Brad Pitt. While the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) may seem like the zombie apocalypse as it empties various cities, it's not.

Not yet anyway.

Jesting aside, the recent spread of this insidious virus exposes a few things about one's spiritual stature and how deeply we're living in the kingdom of God.

Consider these two questions:

- 1. How much are you thinking about others over yourself? E.g., are you hoarding toilet paper, food, hand sanitizer, etc. for your own family or are you purchasing items for others also?
- 2. How much does fear rule your heart instead of trust in your Lord?

One of the greatest marks of spiritual progress is that you remain calm in the face of crisis, adversity, danger, and threats.

It's easy to think we are further along in our spiritual walk than we really are.

Whenever the world panics over something, we get a clear look at our own spiritual stature. (Something we can *begin* to change immediately.)

It's also an opportunity for kingdom-first seekers ("Insurgents") to shine.

Historically, it's always been genuine Jesus-followers who took care of their own (meaning, other members of the body of Christ) as well as the lost when plagues swept through villages and cities. Even risking their own lives to do so.

"We do not lose control of our lives. What we lose is the illusion that we were ever in control in the first place."

~ Barbara Brown Taylor

Here are some suggestions on this score along with golden wisdom from a luminary from the past:

• If you've been caught in the riptide of hoarding, how about giving away some of those items you've snatched up to others who are less fortunate?

- Raise the level of your confidence in your Lord and refuse to fear.
- Educate yourself on the virus and how it spreads. Take the necessary precautions (faith doesn't equal foolishness), but don't allow your heart to be gripped by anxiety or panic.

I believe in God's protection, but I also wear a seat belt. Faith isn't opposed to knowledge. It's opposed to sight. It's not opposed to wisdom. It's opposed to worry.

- Take a virus shot you'll find one in Psalm 91. But notice the two conditions as you read the chapter.
- If you or a loved one happens to be sick, throw your entire faith in Jesus as Healer. And *expect* Him to manifest His healing hand.
- Refuse to become obsessed with the worst-case news on the subject. This obsession can cause fear to take over your heart.
- Do what you can to boost your immune system. That's just wisdom for all times.
- Resist the urge to watch Zombie movies or read anything with the word "apocalypse" in it.

Here are sane words from C.S. Lewis many years ago when panic over the atomic bomb captured the imaginations of the world, including many Christians:

"This is the first point to be made: and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together. If we are all going to be destroyed by an atomic bomb, let that bomb when it comes find us doing sensible and human things — praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music, bathing the children, playing tennis, chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts — not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs. They may break our bodies (a microbe can do that) but they need not dominate our minds." *

Even if you're not huddled inside, you'll receive encouragement from these podcasts. I created them to educate, equip, strengthen, inspire and bring joy to my fellow Insurgents.

You can hear them all on iTunes and every other podcast app.

GO HERE TO ACCESS THE PODCASTS.

* "On Living in an Atomic Age" in Present Concerns: Journalistic Essays.

Focus on These Parts of Your Life Right Now (Especially if the Sky is Falling)

"We must go through many hardships, sufferings, and tribulations to fully enter the kingdom of God."

~ Paul and Barnabas (Acts 14:22, paraphrased and expanded)

If you're currently going through a rough patch, I have five brief words of advice for you:

- * Focus on the parts of your life that aren't painful right now. Make a list of good things in your life at the present time. Maybe it's your health. Maybe it's some of your relationships. Maybe it's your job. Maybe it's the house you live in. Whatever doesn't stink in your life right now, write those things down, be thankful for them, and focus your thoughts on them.
- * Your present storm has an expiration date. In nature, every hurricane and tornado eventually passes. None of them hang around permanently. And so it is in the spiritual realm. The clouds will eventually part in your situation. Until then, hang on. Hat tip to Rick Warren who wrote this line to me yesterday in an email: "'It came to PASS.' It didn't come to stay!" Don't forget that the storm you're currently in will eventually pass.
- * God is aiming at something specific through your trial. Whenever we look at our lives and say, "It's not supposed to be this way," the Lord has another idea. He's driving at something in your life. Something He wishes to change for His glory and for your good (Romans 8:28). And He's using the present circumstances to awaken you to it. Prayerfully and thoughtfully, take a personal inventory and discover what that "something" is.
- * Be thankful for people and situations that are making your life hellish right now. Why? Because they are the Lord's instruments to transform you, to cause you to grow, and to make you stronger. Yes, it's counterintuitive. But that's what life in the kingdom of God is counterintuitive.
- * If you are still alive, it means you haven't fulfilled your purpose yet. It doesn't matter if all hell is breaking lose around you, your mission isn't finished. How do I know that? Because you're not dead yet. Go find out what that specific mission is and get laser focused on it.

Presently, I'm writing a new book on the theme of "what to do when your life is falling apart."

Most people I know are going through a first-class trial right now, or they've recently been through one, or there's one waiting around the corner. Wherever you are on that spectrum, I hope this chapter encourages you.

How to Survive a Crisis

This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, <u>Hang On, Let Go</u>.

In <u>Episode #63</u> of the Insurgence podcast, we discussed **how kingdom people handle crisis** – the current pandemic crisis as well as ANY health, financial, or relational crisis.

You can listen **HERE**.



This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, Hang On, Let Go	This chapter has	been revised	l and is included ir	າ Frank's new book,	Hang On, Let Go.
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Look Down, Not Up

This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, <u>Hang On, Let Go</u>.

Why You Need to Purge and Prune

This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, <u>Hang On, Let Go</u>.

The Breaking of God

This chapter has been revised and is included in Frank's new book, <u>Hang On, Let Go</u>.

Three Killer Lessons from THE WALKING DEAD

"We are more willing to attack one another than to band together and fight the enemy."

~ Lance Wallnau

AMC's TV drama *The Walking Dead* has been the highest rated series in cable television history.

I'm not a zombie guy (though some mornings, I might resemble one).

Unlike many of my peers who possess a Y chromosome, slashy-burny-butcher-gore films don't appeal to me.

It's for this reason that I've stayed clear of watching *The Walking Dead*.

That is, until a friend told me that the show is largely about surviving in community over against blowing zombie carcasses to the moon.

So I gave it a try. And I was hooked in the first season. (In many ways, *The Walking Dead* is similar to the TV show LOST — which I thought was superb.)

Recently, I finished Seasons 1 to 6 of *The Walking Dead*. (And I won't go on to watch any more episodes.)

Beyond the compelling characters, rich storylines, and incomparable acting, the parallels to the spiritual walk are impressive. The gruesome scenes, notwithstanding.

What follows are three critical lessons I observed while watching.

Warning: if you're one of those befuddled souls who got on my mailing list by some freak accident in a parallel universe, our beloved Blog Manager moderates all comments. So if you write something that's downright nasty, you'll be blocked faster than Bill Clinton's arteries.

Lesson 1: Exposure is Inevitable

You don't know what people are really like until you observe them under pressure. Only then do their true colors emerge.

(I riffed on this at length in Scratch a Christian and You'll Find Out What's Underneath.)

Too often, you can't see the fruit unless the tree is shaken.

This sober fact is brought out powerfully in *The Walking Dead*.

People who seemed to be noble characters at first get exposed for being sub-human creatures. No, they aren't flesh-tearing zombies. They're worse. More on that later.

Others who seemed to have black hearts end up exhibiting goodness, self-sacrifice, and genuine love.

To wit, never underestimate the kind of exposure that pressure, struggle, offenses, and disappointments manifest.

Another example of being exposed under pressure is the 2009 movie, *Exam*.

Animal Farm reveals the same thing.

In short, survival brings out the best and the worst in people. And you really don't know who you are or what you are until a fellow Christian doesn't meet your expectations. Nor do you know who your fellow "Christians" really are until someone "scratches" them.

This truth separates black sheep from goats. ©

Lesson 2: Community is Possible But Costly

I've said it often, but Christ-centered community is exotically rare on this earth. By "Christ-centered," I don't mean a group of people who talk bulbously about Jesus.

I'm talking about a face-to-face community that *evidences* by their lives that Jesus of Nazareth is Lord of this world. In other words, Jesus is the practical head of their lives.

This "evidence" is mostly clearly seen in how the members of the community treat one another as well as how they treat those outside of it (Matthew 7:12).

Do they gossip? Do they back-bite? Do they become jealous of one another and sow seeds of discord in the group? Do they become easily offended at each other and take vengeance? Do they impute bad motives to other people? Do they bad-mouth, tear-down, and even lie about one another? If another member is in trouble, do they treat them the same way they'd want to be treated if they were the ones in trouble?

Or ... do they deny themselves? Do they lay their lives down for each other? Do they have each other's backs? Do they see themselves as family? Do they place the same priority on the other members as they do on themselves and their own blood kin?

It's the latter that I mean by "Christ-centered."

And yes, what I'm describing does exist, but it's rarer than chicken molars in our time. (The fact is, most Christians don't lay their lives down for each other. The common attitude is, "It's not my problem, so I won't treat it with nearly as much attention or diligence as if it were happening to me.")

The community that's formed in *The Walking Dead* (embodied by the key characters) reflects this brand of "I-have-your-back-and-won't-leave-you-behind" dynamic. They lay their lives down for each other.

The characters weren't always this way. In fact, some who were against the community eventually were "converted" to it and became loyal members.

In this regard, the show richly portrays the power of forgiveness, redemption, and reconciliation. It underscores the beauty of entering into a new family that's made up of completely different personalities, but who share a common bond.

Sadly, the love and loyalty that the core community has for one another eclipses that found in the hearts of most Christians today.

No, the members of the show's community aren't perfect by any means. Just as no believer or Christian community is perfect. Nor am I suggesting that community in the show is "Christian" (so calm down).

Like most modern TV shows, the clergy are made to look like insipid imbeciles, and immorality is portrayed as acceptable. So it's not a "Christian" TV program. But the power of close-knit, devoted community is presented powerfully.

Lesson 3: Endurance is Required

Another lesson that's brought out in the show is the power of, and need for, endurance.

Jesus said, "He/she who endures until the end shall be saved."

It's one thing to start out strong in the Christian walk. It's another to finish.

Things are easy for a time. Then someone hits the warp drive and you're trying to navigate through the blur.

It's during those times that the pressure to quit following the Lord seriously become too unbearable for some. But keep in mind that being on the ropes isn't the same as bleeding out.

Sometimes you have to spew over the side of the boat and keep rowing.

The older I get, the more people I meet who shipwrecked their faith (to borrow Paul's phrase). These people were once ready to charge hell with a water pistol. Today, however, they don't even believe in God.

And it's not because some college professor told them that a person must have an IQ lower than a banana to believe the Bible. No, it's mostly because of unanswered prayers coupled with the deplorable way that some "Christians" treat those who genuinely follow Christ.

"And pray that we'll be rescued from these scoundrels who are trying to do us in. I'm finding that not all 'believers' are believers. But the Master never lets us down. He'll stick by you and protect you from evil. Because of the *Master*, we have great confidence in *you*. We know you're doing everything we told you and will continue doing it. May the Master take you by the hand and lead you along the path of God's love and Christ's endurance."

~ 2 Thessalonians 3:3-5, The Message

The Greater Problem

Since we're on the subject of zombies, Paul tells us that before we came to Christ, we were among the walking dead:

"As for you, don't you remember how you used to just exist? Corpses, dead in life, buried by transgressions, wandering the course of this perverse world."

~ Ephesians 2:1, The Voice

"You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away."

~ Colossians 2:13

Yep, the Zombie Apocalypse began with Adam's foible. So we were all zombies, existing only to satisfy our own cravings.

However, the so-called "Christians" who engage in verbal violence, hatred, lies, slander, and jealousy do more damage to the world than the dead who walk.

Paul called them "false brethren" (2 Corinthians 11:26; Galatians 2:4).

Jesus referred to them as "tares" among wheat (Matthew 13:24-30).

The Walking Dead makes this point loud and clear.

The Takeaway

Like it or not, the world abounds with lukewarm Christians, on the one hand, and self-righteous, mean-spirited, judgmental ones on the other.

But God is looking for a people who (1) know how to endure until the end, refusing to walk off the field before the whistle blows, (2) are exposed to be people of the meek and mild Lamb when under pressure, and (3) are willing to lay their lives down for the good of the believing community.

This is the divine call in this hour.

Thankfully, the majority of you are survivors. Everything else is dust in our eyes.

Update: I have not gone on to watch Season 7 of the TV series, losing interest after the final episode of Season 6. It was WAY too violent. Over the top for me.

Warning: The World is Watching How We Christians Treat One Another

"If Christians cannot extend grace through faithful presence within the body of believers, they will not be able to extend grace to those outside."

~ James Davison Hunter

Recently, someone asked me the following question.

"Frank, if I had to summarize your ministry, it would be that Jesus is more than we ever imagined and we can learn to live by His life which is evidenced by treating others the same way we want to be treated. Would you say that this is accurate?"

My answer: "Yes, that sums it up well. These two themes are underscored in many of my books and blog posts."

Not long ago I wrote a piece for a periodical explaining why I am a Christian (which I'll republish here in the future). I ended the piece by asking why those who aren't Christians have decided not to follow Jesus (yet, at least). Here's what one person wrote:

"I'm not a Christian because of how most of the Christians I've known treat each other. Not loving like their founder taught but just the opposite. I like that your list wasn't applogetic or combative but personal and I respect that. Rare but nice to see."

This harkens back to Gandhi's famous line,

"I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ" ... "If it weren't for Christians, I'd be a Christian."

It's not uncommon for some Christians to throw verbal assaults at one another on Facebook, blogs, Twitter, and other online venues. As a result, the world sees people who profess to follow Jesus – the Prince of Peace – fighting, misrepresenting one another, and even "blocking" one another.

"But if you bite and devour one another, take heed that you don't consume one another."

~ Galatians 5:15

There once were two cats of Kilkenny

Each thought there was one cat too many

So they fought and they fit

And they scratched and they bit

'Til excepting their nails

And the tips of their tails

Instead of two cats there weren't any.

Civil disagreement and even debate, when done in the spirit of Christ, are healthy and helpful.

But when disagreements descend into second-guessing motives, distortions of one another's words, mischaracterizations of one another's views, and personal attacks, then we've moved into the flesh.

The net is that the name of Jesus gets tarnished in no small way.

So how do we change that?

Here are 7 points to consider the next time you think you have a possible disagreement with another Christian:

1. Go to them privately and ask them what they meant by what they said, did, or wrote or what they allegedly said, did, or wrote. Jesus said to go to our brother or sister in private if we have an issue with them. Since we don't want to misrepresent others in public, going to them directly helps prevent this. And you would want the same treatment if the shoe happened to be on your foot.

About 6 months ago, I was reading someone's Facebook wall where they quoted a friend of mine who came out with a new book on evangelism. The entire thread was about what my friend may have meant or didn't mean. People got angry at one another. Some began blocking others. (These are Christians, mind you.)

Finally, a woman jumped in and said, "Excuse me, but instead of questioning what he may have meant or didn't mean, why don't you just write him a message and ask him? He's on Facebook, you know."

Her remark arrested everyone and you could smell the embarrassment. Amazingly, no one ever thought to even try to contact my friend and ask. If they had done so in the beginning, the whole issue would have been resolved and the carnage wouldn't even have begun.

2. When you go to another believer privately, ask them questions. Don't make accusations. Again, put yourself in their shoes and ask yourself, "How would I want to be treated if the roles were reversed and someone had an issue with me?" In my experience, I've found that accusations based on second- or third-hand information are usually inaccurate. And they are often rooted in misunderstandings.

One time Jesus made a statement about one of His followers saying, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this remark, a rumor spread among the disciples that the disciple Jesus was referring to would never die. But Jesus never said that this disciple would not die; He only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?" (John 21:22-23).

If Jesus — the perfect Teacher — was misunderstood by those who were in His corner, how much more does it happen with us?

- **3.** Never, ever, evah, nevah judge the motives or intentions of another human being. To do so is to sin against them and against God. You and I cannot read someone else's heart. While it's fine to question someone's judgment, it's wrong to judge their motives. "Love thinks no evil," Paul said in 1 Corinthians 13, but it always believes the best of others. Again, this is covered under Jesus' gold-plated "do unto others" commandment.
- **4. Never entertain gossip or slander about another sister or brother in Christ.** Again, treat others the same way you want them to treat you. Jesus not only commanded this, He said this commandment fulfills the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 7:12). By the way, I've found that many Christians don't know what slander or gossip is (unless it's happening to them). They mistakenly think that if something is true or half-true, it's not gossip or slander. Not so. **Jon Zens' remarkable article on this subject is the best I've ever read**. Every Christian should read it.
- **5.** Seek peace with all you have. "If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone," Paul said in Romans 12:18. We aren't going to agree on everything. In fact, I am unaware of any book that exists where all Christians agree with every word or understand every word the same way. That includes the Bible itself.

None of us can claim immaculate perception. So we should be open for correction. But how you approach someone is incredibly important. How we treat one another while we disagree is just as important as the nature of our disagreement.

6. Remember that the world is watching how we Christians treat one another and talk about one another. You can be the greatest evangelist on planet Earth in terms of being able to boldly

witness to non-Christians about Jesus. And you can blow the loudest trumpet about mission and discipleship. But if you treat your fellow sisters and brothers in Christ in ways that you would never want to be treated yourself, then you nullify your evangelistic efforts. In addition, how you treat your fellow brothers and sisters is monumentally important to our Lord.

7. Remember Jesus' last prayer on earth before He gave His life for us. It gives us a peek into what's foremost in His heart. "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me (John 17:20-21)."

May the Lord have mercy on us all ...

Stop Wasting Your Time Doing This!

While I'm not a fan of Facebook groups, I do enjoy connecting with people on my <u>Facebook</u> <u>page</u>.

However, from time to time, I'll look at some of the news feeds of my friends. And I'll see some of them getting roped into full-blown doctrinal beat downs on their walls.

In like manner, I've been pulled into countless Facebook groups – meaning, people "joined" me.

I don't follow these groups and rarely make a comment.

However, once in a while I'll get tagged, so I end up looking at the thread.

For the last 7 years, I've been observing these groups. And I've lost count of the knock-down, drag-out, WWE-styled smackdowns over biblical topics and social issues.

The people go back and forth, some ending up being so infuriated that they end up blocking their debating opponents.

In addition, some of the befuddled contentious souls are routinely banned from these groups.

(Oh, these are all "Christian" groups, mind you. Ahem ...)

Not once during these blood-lettings have I ever seen anyone change their minds.

Lots of wasted time and energy is burned up in these threads. And for that reason, people leave them constantly.

Why, then, do people continue to argue and exchange theological (and personal) blows on Facebook?

These are the thoughts that have gone through my mind whenever I've observed these things:

"Has it not dawned on them that their comments are not making a dent in the minds of others?"

"Do they have too much time on their hands, so debating and angering people is a pleasant hobby for them?"

"Do they have a lot of pent up frustration that they are unwittingly unleashing on the poor souls who are part of these groups?"

"Have they *still* not discovered the other means that *actually* impact people and change hearts and minds?"

Now, I'm sure there may be a few exceptions to the above. (In life, there are always the .001% exceptions.)

Typically, authors who have loyal followings don't have this problem too often, and Facebook groups that are tiny don't either.

But for the rest, it's pretty much the norm.

Surprisingly, shortly after I wrote the draft for this chapter, one of my Facebook friends made this comment on his wall:

"Facebook is not a place for intelligent dialogue. I have learned very few people can have a rational discussion about just about anything. I look, but have learned to refrain from engaging current political, religious or cultural topics. The vast majority of people already have their minds made up on a given issue and viewpoint. Facebook is merely a place they use to reinforce that viewpoint and anything challenging them is viciously attacked."

Interesting, eh?

My point is simple.

Facebook isn't the best place to change people's minds.

It's a great way to keep up with old friends or — if you're a writer of any kind — to connect with your readers.

But in terms of real impact and changing people's minds, there are far more effective ways of doing both.

P.S. The bloodbaths we routinely see on social media when Christians unsheathe their swords against one another over doctrinal or political disagreements provoked me to write the book **ReGrace: What the Shocking Beliefs of the Great Christians Can Teach Us Today**.

A High-Octane Spiritual Cocktail

Here are some audios I've published that collectively comprise a high-octane spiritual cocktail to treat the virus.

How Kingdom People Handle Crisis (Audio)

Worry, Hurry, Anxiety and Kingdom Living (Audio)

Trials, Tribulations, and the Kingdom of God (Audio)

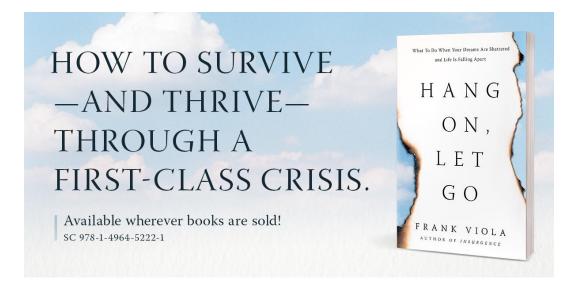
The Challenge of Waiting on God (Audio)

Practical Lessons on Kingdom Living: Part 1 (Audio)

Practical Lessons on Kingdom Living: Part 2 (Audio)

Practical Lessons on Kingdom Living: Part 3 (Audio)

Keeping the Eternal Perspective (Audio)



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