



# Strands of Thought

FROM GREG STRAND

ARTICLE

UNDERSTANDING SCRIPTURE (/BLOG/THEOLOGY)

## Christ, Christianity and COVID-19

*Resources from John Piper, John Lennox and Tim Keller*

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<https://twitter.com/efca>

When we face fear, uncertainty or the unknown, we long for a trusted companion to guide us through the labyrinth. God and his Word are absolutely foundational to guide us during these days. God is “with us,” He is “for us,”

and He leads and guides us.

## God's Word

It is both important and helpful to remember how Calvin used three metaphors as he referred to the Scriptures, God's Word: spectacles, a labyrinthine thread and a school (cf. Graham A. Cole, *Faithful Theology: An Introduction* (<https://www.crossway.org/books/faithful-theology-tpb/>), 33–35).

- *Spectacles* (*Institutes* (<https://www.amazon.com/Institutes-Christian-Religion-1536-Calvin/dp/0802841678>) I.6.1): “For as the aged, or those whose sight is defective, when any book however fair, is set before them, though they perceive that there is something written, are scarcely able to make out two consecutive words, but, when aided by glasses, begin to read distinctly, so Scripture, gathering together the impressions of Deity, which, till then, lay confused in our minds, dissipates the darkness, and shows us the true God clearly.”
- *Labyrinthine Thread* (*Institutes* I.6.3): “We should consider that the brightness of the Divine countenance, which even an apostle declares to be inaccessible, (1 Tim 6:16) is a kind of labyrinth—a labyrinth to us inextricable, if the Word does not serve us as a thread to guide our path; and that it is better to limp in the way, than run with the greatest swiftness out of it.”
- *School* (*Institutes* 3.21.3): “Therefore, in order to keep the legitimate course in this matter, we must return to the word of God, in which we are furnished with the right rule of understanding. For Scripture is the school of the Holy Spirit, in which as nothing useful and necessary to be known has been omitted, so nothing is taught but what it is of importance to know.”

# Trusted companions

It is also both important and helpful to have trusted companions who have walked humbly and faithfully with the Lord for many years, who have embodied “long obedience in the same direction,” grounded in the absolute authority of the Word of God. They have saturated themselves in the Scriptures, which has formed and shaped who they are and the kind of ministry to which they have committed themselves to serve the people of God.

Below we include three of those companions, the first and third well-known to most of us, John Piper and Tim Keller. I also include brief annotations of each of the resources included.

John Piper, *Coronavirus and Christ*

(<https://www.desiringgod.org/books/coronavirus-and-christ>) (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020). (100 pages)

"On January 11, 2020, a novel coronavirus (COVID-19) reportedly claimed its first victim in the Wuhan province of China. By March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization had declared a global pandemic. In the midst of this fear and uncertainty, it is natural to wonder what God is doing.

In *Coronavirus and Christ*, John Piper invites readers around the world to stand on the solid Rock, who is Jesus Christ, in whom our souls can be sustained by the sovereign God who ordains, governs, and reigns over all things to accomplish his wise and good purposes for those who trust in him. Piper offers six biblical answers to the question, 'What is God doing through the coronavirus?' reminding us that God is at work in this moment in history."

Here is a **link to the book** (<http://www.desiringgod.org/books/coronavirus-and-christ>) that can be downloaded free of charge. Here, also, is a **link to an audio version of the book**

(<http://www.desiringgod.org/interviews/coronavirus-and-christ-audiobook>) (2 hours). And here, finally, is an **interview with Piper**

(<http://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/gospelbound/john-piper-coronavirus-and-christ/>) (45 minutes), explained in the following way:

"John Piper joined me on **Gospelbound** (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/gospelbound/>) to discuss what God is doing in the coronavirus and the **recent articles by N. T. Wright for *Time*** (<https://time.com/5808495/coronavirus-christianity/>). We also discussed how we can persevere in prayer for an end to this pandemic, and why the **health-and-wealth gospel** from the likes of Kenneth Copeland must be exposed as impotent and dangerous."

John Lennox, *Where is God in a Coronavirus World?*

([https://www.amazon.com/Where-Coronavirus-World-John-](https://www.amazon.com/Where-Coronavirus-World-John-Lennox/dp/1784985694)

[Lennox/dp/1784985694](https://www.amazon.com/Where-Coronavirus-World-John-Lennox/dp/1784985694)) (UK: The Good Book Company, 2020). (60 pages)

"We are living through a unique, era-defining period. Many of our old certainties have gone, whatever our view of the world and whatever our beliefs. The coronavirus pandemic and its effects are perplexing and unsettling for all of us. How do we begin to think it through and cope with it?"

In this short yet profound book, Oxford mathematics professor John Lennox examines the coronavirus in light of various belief systems and shows how the Christian worldview not only helps us to make sense of it, but also offers us a sure and certain hope to cling to."

Here is an interview with Lennox: "**John Lennox on Where to Find God During COVID-19** (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/podcasts/gospelbound/john-lennox-find-god-during-covid-19/>)" (40 minutes)

"In his new book on COVID-19, Lennox points out how the coronavirus exposes our vulnerability, when we expend so much energy pretending that we are immortal. And yet it should be obvious that the relationship between creator and creation is disordered. All is not well. Perhaps this epidemic will make it impossible to avoid the fact that we will all die.

What, then, can Christians say to an anxious world? Can we solve this problem? Lennox doesn't go that far. He writes that 'a Christian is not so much a person who has solved the problem of pain, suffering and the coronavirus, but one who has come to love and trust a God who has himself suffered.' Our discussion touches on God's providence and how we can determine the purpose and nature of his judgments, as well as the differences between natural and moral evil."

Tim Keller, "Peace in Times of Suffering and Uncertainty

(<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/video/keller-peace-uncertainty/>)" (90 minutes, 40-minute message followed by Q&A)

- Keller begins by stating we need to look at evil and suffering not philosophically, but practically. How do you actually face it and respond to it? What do you actually do to move forward in the midst of it? In this message, Keller looks at various religions and worldviews and cultures over the centuries, and he addresses how each of them have equipped members to face pain, suffering, loss and anxiety. Then he will look at Christianity and see what it has to offer. Following this, he compares and contrasts worldviews, focusing on the practicalities of each religion or worldview. Keller's message focuses on three aspects: (1) Why this is important; (2) What the various religions and cultures of the world give you in order to help you to face pain and suffering and to get you to a place of experiencing peace. And finally, (3) what Christianity has to offer in responding to pain and suffering, and providing peace in the midst of the suffering and uncertainty.

## Other resources

Who are other trusted companions, those grounded in God's Word who are faithful guides for other believers as we navigate through this labyrinth of COVID-19? Sharing such resources is one of the ways we can live out the "one another" commands of the Scriptures while living under "shelter at home" orders and working remotely.

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path" (Ps 119:105).



## Greg Strand (/blog/authors/greg-strand)

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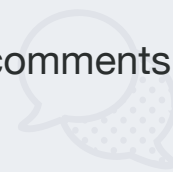
Greg Strand is EFCA executive director of theology and credentialing, and he serves on the Board of Ministerial Standing as well as the Spiritual Heritage Committee. He and his family are members of Northfield (Minnesota) EFC.

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**Denise** · 3 months ago

Do you know any 'trusted authors' who are not Calvinists?

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**Greg Strand** → Denise · 3 months ago

Thank you for your question, Denise. I included one: John Lennox. Who are some of your "trusted companions" who provide guidance and hope in the midst of COVID-19?

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