

ARTICLE

How to talk to your kids about coronavirus

BY DANE HAYS

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I'll never forget the "Great Storm of '93." Twenty-seven years ago, on March 12, 1993, a large cyclone formed over the Gulf of Mexico and became a rare snow storm that affected the southeastern region of the United States all the way up to Canada. Parts of the country that rarely saw snow, such as my home of Birmingham, Alabama, got up to 13 inches of snow. The storm cut off power for many, leading to a strange time for many in our country who weren't used to

high levels of snow. Schools were shut down for many days, people were unable to go to work, and families were forced to stay home and wait out the unusual circumstances in which they found themselves.

Although this was a chaotic time, perhaps what stands out more is how my family came together during this shutdown. I remember using the kerosene heater to warm water, playing card games by candlelight to pass the time, and seeing my parents use that same heater to percolate coffee. Of course we also tried to go out and play in the snow, but my small childhood frame was engulfed in the snow. Busy activities, television, work, and school all came to a halt, bringing us together in a way we wouldn't be on our own.

Here we are almost 30 years later in a similar position. The public health threat of the coronavirus has brought our schedules and our plans to a halt. Churches are cancelling services, sporting and social events are cancelled, and local governments are warning against any unnecessary public contact. While our federal government has declared a national emergency, many of us are torn about what to say and what to do.

Much like that moment for many in the United States in 1993, through the strange providence of God we have been given a moment to pause and consider what we will say and do in response to the coronavirus in 2020. I want to challenge us to use our words in this historical moment to create a lasting memory and example for our children and our loved ones for generations to come. Moreover, I want to challenge us to take this opportunity to teach our children and loved ones about the goodness of God.

Building memories for our children

Memory is a powerful tool for discipleship. In Psalm 42, when the psalmist is at his lowest point, separated from the people of God, the memory of leading the procession and singing with God's people as they went into God's house became a balm to his soul. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper is built on the practice of the church remembering the work of Christ on the cross (1 Cor. 11:23-25). The big moments in our lives are often what stand out in our memories, especially in times of uncertainty. So, I want to challenge us to build two specific memories for our children and loved ones during this time.

What kind of memories are you building, even now, for your children and loved ones about the coronavirus outbreak of 2020? Thirty years from now, my prayer is they will they speak of things like more family time, serving others, and most importantly, hearing about the love and goodness of Christ.

  ([http://twitter.com/home/?status=twitterfy via @erlc](http://twitter.com/home/?status=twitterfy%20via%20@erlc))

First, build memories of humility and trust. Many are directing frustration and fear toward institutions like the media and the government for mishandling the coronavirus. While there is room in the body of Christ for wide-ranging views on the assessment of this public health crisis, our hearts should be at rest and trusting God during these circumstances. Matt Smethurst at The Gospel Coalition posted a truly helpful [piece from C.S. Lewis](https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cs-lewis-coronavirus/) (<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/cs-lewis-coronavirus/>) on this subject that can help us think through a more humble approach. Talk with your kids and loved ones about how God is sovereignly working through this situation. Show them from the scriptures in places like Job how God uses illness to bring together a beautiful plan for his glory. Do not waste this opportunity on grumbling and complaining, but use it to tell God's story.

Second, build memories of service and love. I have seen churches and Christians think creatively about how they can use this as a unique time to serve others even in the midst of difficult times. Churches are arranging for grocery delivery for the elderly, and one church leader I know is actually using this time to become a driver for UberEats to specifically get out and serve his community. Are there neighbors to whom you can show the love of Christ in this moment? Are there ways you can give your resources to help those affected by the crisis?

The big moments in our lives are often associated with our memories of those moments, how we interpreted what was going on, and ultimately what we believed God was doing. What kind of memories are you building, even now, for your children and loved ones about the coronavirus outbreak of 2020? Thirty years from now, my prayer is they will they speak of things like more family time, serving others, and most importantly, hearing about the love and goodness of Christ.



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