

DOCTORS MORE IMPORTANT THAN GOD?

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Throughout our lives, situations arise that cause us to stop and consider what is important to us. As we have gone through the past months with the

COVID 19 pandemic, we have each had to make decisions about where we will go and what we will do in an effort to keep ourselves and others safe. These decisions demonstrate to those around us our priorities, or what is truly important to us. It has been over a year now since we were told to stay home to flatten the curve and a quick look at the pews in church indicates that many are still staying at home because they are afraid they will get the virus. But wait – are they really staying home? A closer look often reveals that trips to the grocery store have made their way back into the routine. After all, we need food to survive! Also, as doctor's offices have reopened, the doctor visits are appearing back on the calendar, whether for addressing health problems or just regular check-ups. It is important that we take proper care of our physical bodies, after all, they are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). But what do we communicate to God and to others when we are willing to venture out to the grocery store and the doctor's office, but remain afraid to attend church? We are in effect saying that the doctor is more important than God. Stay with me here. I know that there are many reasons people may be afraid to return to church, but the truth remains that physical gathering with other believers is very important to God, and should therefore be very important to us; perhaps important enough to warrant taking some risks.

God has specifically commanded us to gather with other believers. Hebrews 10:25 states, "Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching." I am thankful for those who have returned to church, and even some who never quit showing up, but there are too many whose seats are still empty – too many people who are leaving God as the last priority to be added back to the calendar. Some of these individuals have even been the backbone of the church, but they are losing their testimony to other believers as well as non-believers. Their actions communicate that God just isn't that important to them anymore.

What really needs to happen is to get our practice in line with our theology, which is based on the Word of God. God is to be first in our lives, correct? We are to seek Him first (Matthew 6:33) and love Him with our whole being (Matthew 22:37). God clearly communicates that care of our soul should take priority over care for our body when He instructs his disciples in Matthew 10:28 to fear God, which is able to destroy both body and soul in hell, more than they should fear any man (or I would add disease), which can only destroy the body.

No, the doctor is not more important than God. Just because we take all kinds of precautions to protect ourselves does not mean that we will not get COVID. On the other hand, if we do get it, there is no guarantee that we will die from it. Remember, God is in control. Our "days are determined" (Job 14:5) by God and we cannot change that fact (Psalm 139:16, Matthew 6:27, Romans 11:33-36). We cannot shorten or lengthen the days God has ordained for us. Jesus shared the story of the rich man in Luke 12:16-21 who thought he had a long time live and enjoy life, but it wasn't so. I have had to be reminded of this truth of theology that our days are determined by God when my wife's mother passed away at a relatively young age and then recently with the passing of my father. God knows all and has ordained all (Jeremiah 1:5). We don't know how long we have here on this earth, but God does.

Since God is the one who is most important, don't you think we should do what He says? Since God is the one who is in control and knows our days, don't you think we can trust Him to take care of us when we step out in faith to obey one of His commands? I mean, He loved you so much that He sent His Son to die on Calvary's tree for you. This doesn't mean we should abandon common sense and jump over a cliff so to speak, claiming God will protect us, but we cannot disregard God's commands for months and years. Watching or listening to a sermon is not the same as gathering together for worship. Remember Hebrews 10:25 states the *assembly of ourselves together*. We need to see each other's faces in-person and be an encouragement to each other.

The emperor penguins are a unique creation of Almighty God. He has designed them to be able to live in some really harsh weather conditions. One of these ways is by huddling together. When huddled together, penguins stay toasty warm in temperatures well below zero with no protection from the elements. Well, one of the ways God has seen fit for His people to endure difficulties is by gathering together. Remember, two are better than one (Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).

So, who is more important to you, God or the doctor? Are you following God's commands? To many, their fear of a virus has replaced their fear and love of God. God will not let something happen to you that He did not allow. He is in complete control and desires our complete obedience.