

Editorial:

Maturity during Covid-19



When running a long race or climbing a mountain there almost always come a point when one reaches the “wall”. The desire to give up and find relief is normal. If this is so then why do runners still carry on running and mountaineers still carry on climbing after meeting this emotional block? What makes the difference is **where** they have their eyes set on. When they can see beyond their current circumstances and see the summit of the mountain or the end of the race they are motivated to keep going.

In the same way the pressures caused by Covid 19, be they loss of income, isolation, worry for the future, frustration at being in lockdown etc. lead us to look for a way out or relief. A great difference with Covid 19 is that we do not know how long the road is. We don't know if there are only a few weeks, months or the rest of the year until we return to normality. Never the less, one of the most important keys to our **emotional health** is where we fix our eyes.

Where should we fix our eyes? Hebrews 12:1-3 (NIV) tells us clearly: Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, ²**fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. ³Consider him who endured such opposition from sinners, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.”

To fix our eyes on Jesus means that he has already **solved** that which causes us to worry. To fix our eyes on Jesus means that this suffering is not a punishment but training to help us **mature**.

He has already taken our punishment on himself.

To fix our eyes on Jesus means that we already have the **victory**.

Although there is much **uncertainty** in the world he never changes.

Although there is much **selfishness** in the world there is nothing that can separate us from his love. Although there is much **suffering** in the world, he suffered more to put an end to suffering for ever.

The types of suffering that we are experiencing during this global crisis are very different. What is similar is that these pressures reveal much about our spiritual, emotional, physical and relational health. If in less stressful times we struggle against anger, impatience, lack of joy, these tendencies can be accentuated even more in times of crisis.

What can we do when our weaknesses come to the surface?

Do not hide them. Bring them into the light so that Christ can heal them. Admit your weakness to him in prayer and if appropriate to trustworthy mature Christians.

Ask for help. Although you cannot be seen in person, a chat via telephone or a zoom call with a counsellor or a mature person can be a vital step.

Look after your body. Lack of decent sleep, healthy eating and lack of exercise affect our state of well-being. Think of a small step (like going to sleep earlier) that you can take to look after your body and spirit better.

Seek spiritual food. Psalm 1 puts it poetically. Blessed is he who meditates on the word day and night, he will be like a “tree planted by streams of water”. (NIV) The Bible also reminds us of Jesus power which is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor 12:9).

Personally speaking, stress and pressure that I feel in various areas of my life have revealed some immaturity. When I think of these areas I feel a shame but I also know that this shame does not come from God.

“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus “Rom 8:1. Although the process of maturity will take the rest of my life through Christ I have already been made perfect “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” Phil 1:6. (NIV)

No need to feel shame. Even the prophet Elijah in the middle of his deep despair said to God that he wanted to die. (1 Kings 19). The way that God cares for us reminds us of his kindness towards us when we are dispirited, depressed or worried. The revelation of our hurts and weaknesses are a time to remember his compassion towards us and to grow in our desire for intimacy with him.

Also when one suffers traumatic experiences such as the loss of work or a beloved, God suffers with us. Jesus wept for Lazarus, even though he was about to resurrect him. We have a God who is kind and compassionate. We need to use these times to grow in intimacy with him. With much appreciation for all that you are and do as leaders.

Robert Reich, M.Sc.
 robert@centroesdras.org

¹ Thune, R. & Walker, W. (2009) *La Vida Centrada en el Evangelio: Guía de Estudio con Notas para el Líder. El huérfano vs. el hijo.* (p. 37) New Growth Press

Questions to think about

1. Which characteristics of maturity are your strengths? How are they evidence of God 's grace towards you?
2. Which characteristics of immaturity have you experienced recently? How can you receive the grace of God in these areas so that you can grow?

Comparisons for self-reflection
 Characteristics of emotional/spiritual maturity

MATURITY	IMMATURITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You can freely admit when you have made a mistake <input type="checkbox"/> You resolve interpersonal conflicts with empathy towards the other person <input type="checkbox"/> You accept your limits and can say “no” wisely <input type="checkbox"/> You have been freed from the weight of having to make a name for yourself <input type="checkbox"/> You feel pardoned and totally accepted by God <input type="checkbox"/> You turn to prayer as a first resort <input type="checkbox"/> The fruits of the spirit are evident in your life (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> You go on the defensive when someone criticises you <input type="checkbox"/> You distance yourself from conflicts instead of trying to resolve them <input type="checkbox"/> You try to do everything and say “yes” to others to please them <input type="checkbox"/> Your value is based on success or failure <input type="checkbox"/> You feel the need to look good in front of others <input type="checkbox"/> You lack daily intimacy with God <input type="checkbox"/> The fruits of the flesh are evident in your life (selfishness, envy, anger etc.)

In this time of challenge for all, we are working as much as possible from home, conscious of our calling. We are developing the programmes and areas knowing that more than ever the importance of the ministry of biblical formation for leaders, in a global crisis in which we are living, is when we need to show that Jesus brings hope, love, support, comfort, peace, etc.

This has been a time of reflection, to put into perspective and context what we do and how we do it. The Lord is always bringing us opportunities to keep going in our growth as his children, growing in faith, in hope and in ingenuity. He does not change and even in the most adverse of circumstances he is with us. We keep learning to trust and depend on Him more each day. "Even when walking through the dark valley of death I will not be afraid, for you are close beside me, guarding, guiding all the way" (psalm 23:4 Living Bible). We thank the Lord that we can see his mercy every morning in our lives and ministry.

We keep going in order to serve you better, renewed and transformed with our eyes fixed on Jesus.

Theological studies and programmes

The diplomas and seminars have been cancelled temporarily owing to the restrictions on travel and meetings because of Covid 19. If the situation allows they will begin again at the end of the second semester.

3 of the diploma courses have been redesigned including those on the pedagogy of Jesus, Biblical worldview and Mission in the way Jesus taught us. **Lily de Ortiz, Kevin Johnson, Israel Ortiz** and **Geoff Baines** were all involved in this process.

Advances in the Emergency plan to deal with the Crisis of Covid-19



Owing to the pandemic of Covid 19 we had to implement an emergency plan to face the crisis. By the grace of God, the objectives strategies and activities have advanced. We thank the Lord for the work of the team and of the prayer team to progress the plan. In this process the lord in his faithfulness has given us economic support through our friends *Hilfe fur Bruder* so that we can obtain and implement our virtual platform. It will be fundamental in order to be able to offer the diplomas and other courses on line. We also wish to thank especially **Dorothee Kuhs**, coordinator of Latin American projects for her friendship, mediation and support in presenting the project to the committee of *Hilfe*.

From the beginning of April, the centre has been participating in the Forum of Christian Institutions who have co-sponsored a series of forums on "Pastoral reflections in a time of crisis". Fellow members include World Vision, MOCVIN, Baptist Theological Seminary, Bible Society, Theological Fellowship of Latin America, the Cross Institute and ourselves. **Israel Ortiz** was an expositor in the forum entitled "Covid 19 and Human Dignity" and our colleague **Robert Reich** will participate in the forum "Covid 19 and Integral Health" on 10 July. The recordings can be seen via our Facebook page.

Finally, as part of the plan it was decided to develop a series of articles relating to Covid 19 to accompany our students and their church leaders. These have been sent to them and also published in Facebook. **Geoff Baines** wrote an article entitled "Using time wisely", **Lily de Ortiz** "the rising impact of domestic violence in the context of Coronavirus", **Benita Simon** "From the pandemic to hope for all creation," **Damaris Lopez de Schapiama** "Children in a time of Coronavirus", **Otto Ralon** "Losses and hurts and how to confront them in the context of the Coronavirus" and **Israel Ortiz** "Covid 19 does not have the last word" and "Covid 19 lays bare human fragility"

In the middle of all this Robert Reich obtained his certificate in Health Coaching via Wellcoaches Corporation. We pray that it may be a tool that supports the area of integral health both to those who take the course and the communities where they work.

WEBINAR
COVID-19 Y DIGNIDAD HUMANA
 REFLEXIONES PASTORALES EN TIEMPOS DE CRISIS
 Dr. Israel Ortiz, Obispo Juan Manuel Castañeda, Dr. Gonzalo Chamorro
 VIERNES 15 DE MAYO 6:00 p.m.
 Facebook Live Instituto Crux

Centro Esdras
 8ª CONSULTA
LA MISIÓN DE DIOS EN EL CONTEXTO DE LA MIGRACIÓN GLOBAL
 "La tierra se llenará del conocimiento de la gloria del Señor." Hb. 2:14 NTV
POSTPONED
 RUTH PADILLA, DAVID RUIZ, ISRAEL ORTIZ, HUGO MORALES

We have to inform you that the Conference due to take place in July 2020 has been postponed until 2021. We will keep you informed as to the progress of the event in the future.

Coordinating Team 8th Conference "God's Mission in the Context of Global Migration"

We invite you to visit the web page of United World Mission (the sending organisation of our colleague **Kevin Johnson**) as we are now associated with them and they have enabled us to receive donations from the USA.

They can provide receipts for these donations. We are very grateful for their support.

Please **PRAY** for the following:

- The safety and work of the team in the middle of the increase in the number of cases of Covid 19
- Wisdom to carry out the 2020 emergency plan
- Creation of new diplomas
- Development and launching of the virtual platform for new diploma courses
- Provision from the Lord. Owing to the current crisis all teaching activities have been suspended so we are not receiving any income from this area.
- That we would be able to accompany the leaders and pastors who are in the middle of their courses and the renewal of the courses.
- For the state of health in the country and economic problems of families in Guatemala.

The psalmist reminds not to fear, trust in the Lord and rest in his work. Thank you for your fellowship and constant support for the ministry and advance of the Kingdom of God.

With joy we pray for you and your dear families

UNITED WORLD MISSION
 VAMOS DAR COMPAÑERO
Proyectos
 Guatemala: Centro Esdras
 El Centro Esdra (Centro Esdras) es un ministerio internacional cuyo objetivo es usar la Palabra de Dios para formar líderes de servicio que sean capaces de practicar una misión holística. Los estudiantes aprenden a través de actividades participativas e interactivas que tienen en cuenta los contextos y las realidades actuales en el proceso de aprendizaje. No solo centramos por modular el pensamiento bíblico y la práctica de la misión bíblica de los líderes colaboramos para que sus vidas reflejen los valores del Reino de Dios y se conviertan en agentes de cambio en sus iglesias y comunidades.



info@centroesdras.org

www.centroesdras.org

(502) 2441 0387

33 avenida "A" 7-68 zona 7
 Jardines de Tikal II
 Ciudad de Guatemala



Centro Esdras