

feature

# uncertainty our new normality

**Georgie Coster** looks at how we find security in insecure and uncertain circumstances

**W**e've heard a lot about how COVID-19 affects the lungs, often catastrophically. But what about the heart? This disease can expose issues of the heart we have been blissfully unaware of, and that can be painful.

The pandemic has disfigured life as we knew it in the UK, and our 'normality' is now characterised by uncertainty. How many people will die today? When will we flatten the curve? When will a vaccine be ready? And the more personal questions: How many of my colleagues will die?

Will my family members all survive this? Will I? We don't know. We hate not knowing, don't we?

## secrets exposed

The UK is not without its problems, but we're comparatively affluent, predictably rainy, and well vaccinated. In those circumstances, we trust God.

The last few months, however, with all their unanswerable questions, have brutally uncovered something festering in my heart, up to now successfully concealed by a relatively comfortable life. COVID-19, it turns out, is a

revealer of truth. My once-compensating heart is suddenly in decompensated failure (metaphorically speaking). In the Bible, King David knew the feeling when he was surrounded by 'innumerable evils' and confessed, 'My heart fails within me'.<sup>1</sup>

Uncertainty reveals where our heart is finding security. What are we trusting in? Safety nets litter our lives: Avoiding carcinogens, locking doors at night, effective vaccinations. But when we have never smoked and find a lump; when we lock the door, and an intruder climbs through the window; and when there is no vaccine, we remember the truth. The whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs.<sup>2</sup> The intensity and frequency of contractions are increasing.

Eating healthily is great, and locking doors is sensible, but helpful privileges can morph into an illusion of safety. Consequently, we are utterly shaken when an invisible virus reminds us that actually, safety in this world does not exist.

## the object of our trust

The same David who felt his heart failing within him because of the dangerous world he lived in also knew there was one place of refuge.

*'I will both lie down in peace, and sleep; For You alone, O LORD, make me dwell in safety.'* Psalm 4:8

You alone, O Lord, make me dwell in safety. Not You and my burglar alarm. Not You and my airbag. Not You and the day that the vaccine is finally ready, and we can leave our homes in confidence.

## no, you alone

I can't remember a day of my primary school career that didn't involve a game of Tag (or Tig). The only safety from lurking taggers was being 'on den' - be that a tree, a bench or a bin. There, you were untouchable.

Is David saying that trusting God gives us guaranteed immunity from disease, disaster and death? Is trusting Him like being on den? Of course not. Before he was crucified, Jesus told his disciples (and by extension, us), 'Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows'. Why would he leave them on such a cheery note? As if hearing our question, Jesus says in the same verse, 'I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me'.<sup>3</sup> We might ask how a life filled with difficulty and sadness can give peace. Don't miss his two final words. Trouble in the world. Peace in him. 'He himself is our peace.'<sup>4</sup> Our peace does not come from divine protection from all forms of suffering, but from trusting who our God is.

The big question COVID-19 has caused me to

ask is: 'Do I trust God?' My disturbing response was a resounding 'I'm not sure'. I always knew he was in control, but I've realised that isn't the same as trusting him. A god who is all-powerful but corrupt is not a god our hearts can rest in. Likewise, a god who is wonderfully kind but lacking authority is not a god who can be our peace. Trusting God means believing that he is both in control and thoroughly good.

God has used uncertainty to expose my suspicion of him and replace it with confidence that he is as kind as he is powerful. He is as powerful as he is kind. Hallelujah!

## a process when panic strikes

Mistrust of God inevitably births panic, which in my experience is soon followed by an onslaught of worst-case scenarios parading themselves across the catwalk of the mind. It's tempting to stop these thoughts in their tracks and send them packing. Instead, here's a suggestion. When anxiety comes, allow yourself to go to your worst-case scenario. That will be different for each of us. Imagine Coronavirus has done its very worst. Are you able to say, 'It is well with my soul?' I've found it is possible, but only if I talk myself through two logical implications of God being both all-powerful and all-loving.

1. My God is all-powerful and therefore [insert worst-case scenario] will only happen if he allows it to happen.
2. My God is all-loving and therefore if he allows [insert worst-case scenario] to happen it is for his highest glory and my highest good.

That simple two-step process has become my rescue remedy when uncertainty causes my doubting heart to panic.

Maybe, like me, this pandemic has exposed a mistrust of God of which you had been completely unaware. You were compensating in comfort, but COVID-19 has made you feel your heart is suddenly in end-stage failure. God is being gracious by bringing these things into the light and giving you a golden opportunity to renew your trust in him. Here on earth, we will have many trials and sorrows, but we can have peace because our God can be trusted.

*'My flesh and my heart may fail, But God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever.'*  
Psalm 73:26 🌱

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| 1. Psalm 40:12 | 3. John 16:33     |
| 2. Romans 8:22 | 4. Ephesians 2:14 |