

Fellowship of Christian Athletes

March 22, 2020 Message – Could this be the final shaking?

Dear Cushing ISD FCA students and guests;

In these uncertain times, we hope you all remember that you were put in this world by God himself, to live in this very moment. We face what President Trump calls an “invisible enemy” known as Coronavirus COVID 19. As many churches have closed for the safety of their congregations, the purpose of this message is to reach you with a simple challenge. That challenge is to allow the world see Christ when it is difficult to see anything but anxiety, fear, and isolation. For certain, it is time for generous selfless love of our neighbors and a time for prayer and action.

COVID 19 has caused the United States to enact a public health declaration of emergency, which has not been done since Boston Small Pox made its debut in 1901. COVID 19 has been described as the greatest health-scare in living memory, but it has certainly not been the first.

About 1770 years ago, from years 249 to 262, the world was in a similar crisis. The Roman Empire was stricken with the plague and some cities, like the City of Alexandria experienced a 62% death rate. At its peak, the plague, known as the Plague of Cyprian, claimed the lives of 5000 people per day.

Can you imagine?

Compare the two, Cyprian plague and COVID 19. There is a news article today that details the number of people confirmed to have Coronavirus in Texas. That article headline reads, “Coronavirus cases in Texas swells by 30”. For certain, as Christians, we should take COVID 19 serious, we are obligated to. Our elderly, immune compromised and infants depend on it. But the title is highlighted to express that Coronavirus pales in comparison to the Cyprian Plague.

Wouldn't you agree? Meaning, which would you rather read, “5000 deaths a day” or “swells by 30”?

Again, take COVID 19 serious. It is very serious. But, 5000 deaths a day for the Roman Empire meant families leaving their sick to die in the streets. And many times, those that didn't die from the plague eventually died from hunger or thirst. Can you imagine how scared people were during that time? Can you imagine the loneliness people felt?

What would you do during that time? It would certainly be easy to be anxious and fearful. It would be easy to isolate and to have an “everyone for themselves mentality”. That can be witnessed today by the many walking through Walmart who barely make eye contact as they horde all that they can while 6 feet apart. Don't get me wrong, that was not a suggestion to fail to keep your social distance or to tend to your needs.

But, I am suggesting that we think of others with our actions. I am suggesting that we love our neighbors and leave enough on the shelf for the next guy. If everyone that walked into Walmart was a practicing Christian who truly had the love of others at heart, there would be no signs that read “limit one roll of toilet paper per person”.

I am also suggesting that you embrace this time of sacrifice, even though it hurts me to write it.

You FCA members (and most students for that matter) could easily become disgruntled with all that you are losing. Heck, most of you are at a very low risk of any health problem at all related to COVID19. It would be easy for you to walk around doing whatever you wanted to do, but in a curious case of role reversal, you are now the ones telling your parents to stay home while some are headed to the beach. I wish I had the answers for you, but I do not.

Being away from school is manageable. But it does hurt me to see you miss some of the things that you are not getting to do. Youth Sports organizations were instructed for players not to shake hands and now we can't even play ball. Schools, like us, are closed. Proms and graduations are in question. And you better like eating at home or at a drive-thru. In short, those are precautions required of us so that we limit exposure to those with compromised immune systems.

These sacrifices are based on historical lessons that humanity has learned each time we faced a new disease in which we had no immunity, as we do now with COVID 19 (although the risks are much less than the plague for the majority).

But, we CANNOT forget, Christ's work must go on!

We must find ways to show his love! And, we must find ways to reach out to those in need because a lot of people are in need. During these times, we must balance our own needs with the needs of others and be as safe and healthy as we can in remembering our neighbor.

The point of describing to you the health problems of the Roman Empire was to tell you that the Christian population – the very one that you are a part of now – grew exponentially during the time of the Cyprian Plague, a time when all hope was lost. The reason is simple. The people went to the Pagan Priests for answers, but they had none. The Pagan Priests had no compassion and no empathy either as they thought of themselves. And, to cap it off, most of them fled when the masses came looking for help. The pagan leaders tried to avoid the disease, but eventually, even the Emperor fell victim.

Christians on the other-hand showed love and compassion during that time. They went to the isolated who were dying and in need of help. They did not go with all the answers; they simply went. They were present and shared their resources, kept their spirits up, and never lost hope or faith in Jesus.

Guys and Gals, I do not have all the answers either. I cannot tell you how God wants you to serve. But I can tell you, that a door for ministry has been opened wide for you. Please know that God's kingdom can be expanded during this time. You are alive and well today for that very purpose. As a Christian, you are called to be the church even when the doors are closed. You can make a difference!

A much loved man reminded me that Hebrews 12:27 states that God is shaking everything that can be shaken (all things built by man) so that only the unshakeable will remain prior to the coming of Christ. Nobody knows when the end time will come, but we can honestly look around and know that much has been shaken from us.

Many things that we prioritize over Christ have been taken for the time being.

What I hope for you is that you use this time to slow down and re-evaluate all that is important in your life. I hope that you spend this time with your family and that you get "back to the basics". I hope that you work on your personal relationship with Christ and I hope you remain healthy and well.

But, more than anything treat this as the final shaking, because we never know if it is.

Go out and use this time to reach others. Go out and expand the Kingdom. Go out and face the only Invisible Enemy that has been with us since the Garden - the one who does not want to take just the elderly or the immune compromised like COVID19 or the 62% as did the Cyprian Plague.

Our real invisible enemy – Satan, wants 100% of us.

You, equipped with the power of Christ, can keep that from happening.

The Cushing ISD Fellowship of Christian Athletes loves you very much.

We miss your smiling faces at CISD as well.