

A Word of Encouragement

The Skew Normal

To: Our Royal Palm pastors and church families

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After writing about our Corona-coaster and our National Grief the last two months, now that we're down the road a bit together in this radically changed world, I've been trying to get a feel for what the new normal might look like. Actually, right now I am thinking most of us may already be seeing it, but we either can't quite articulate it, or if we can, we may just not want to say it out loud. It's a bit scary. But that's why it's probably best to get it out and start talking about it, so here's my emerging take for us to consider:

The new normal is, and will most likely continue to be, a constantly twisting, turning, and checkerboard kind of thing. In short, it will be a "skew normal," which is kind of an oxymoron when you stop and think about it.

The word "normal" typically refers to the idea of familiar activities, accepted responsibilities, and fairly predictable routines and rhythms of life that are pretty well agreed upon by the population in general.

Pre-Corona, all the above was supported by granite pillars of life such as work, school, church, government, agencies, stores, restaurants, and tons of entertainment options, recreational outings, and sporting events to enjoy. Even our personal, annual calendar revolved around the cultural pillars of the start and end of the school year and various sports seasons. Now, all those things have become skewed, as those granite pillars have morphed into Jello and can no longer support our sense of "normal."

In addition to that, every day we are all dealing with hefty things like the COVID-19 spike... reopening strategies... sanitation practices... new ministry platforms ... financial uncertainty... protests galore... uncontrolled riots... racism rhetoric... business closings... family tension... political mudslinging... oh, yes, hunger, fear, frustration, anger, depression, sin and fierce disagreement about our best next steps culturally and



individually. But, don't despair, my friends. There is hope. Great hope. There is a light in this darkness.

You see, during sunny days and smooth seas, a lighthouse is pretty much ignored by seafarers as it blends into the landscape as a lovely bit of décor, while its life-saving purpose is largely ignored and forgotten. It is only when the skies get dark and the seas get rough that the real reason for the lighthouse emerges and is greatly appreciated as a guiding light to safety and security.

In our case, as we try to adapt to the dark and stormy "skew normal" in our land and lives, the Lord Jesus really is our only true Light of the World. While He's been a nice bit of spiritual décor in prior seasons of brightness, plenty, and normality, it is His real purpose as our Savior that is coming into focus now. That's why the Bible says:

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:6-7)

It's really true. He's really true. And the more you find your sense of peace, safety, and security in Him, the less your boat will be tossed about in the skew normal that lies ahead as the watchmen on the masts cry out: "Lord, ho!"