

GOD'S PURPOSES IN ALLOWING COVID-19

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COVID-19, or coronavirus disease 2019, is a respiratory illness caused by a coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). The effect of the illness can range from mild to severe. First identified in Wuhan, China, in late 2019, the virus quickly spread to other countries. On March 11, 2020, COVID-19 was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

Only a liar or a true prophet can claim to know God's reasons for bringing about COVID-19 or any other specific calamity. That's partly because God's purpose extends to every individual involved, from the beginning of time to the end of the world. Understanding every possible factor goes far beyond human ability, but God has within His complete knowledge and control every facet of every situation (**Romans 8:28-30**). The Bible reveals some insights about God's use of deadly disasters in general, but we must apply relevant Scripture and the principles of faith in order to gain wisdom about any specific disaster.

As with any mystery, to solve it we must go from the known to the unknown in our search. So we'll put question of why God would allow COVID-19 into the context of what we already know from the Bible and from personal experience: we know that life is a gift from the Creator (**Isaiah 42:5; Acts 17:25**). We know that God alone has the right and power to give life and take it away according to His own wisdom and plans (**Job 2:10**). We know that life is short and includes some degree of suffering, ending in death and judgment for how we lived our lives—only one life with no “do-overs” (**Hebrews 9:27**). Short or long, our lifespan and date of death are set and controlled by God (**Matthew 10:29**). Even the longest human lives are “like a breath; their days are like a fleeting shadow” (**Psalms 144:4**).

Moses described God's sovereignty over life and death, and this could have been written about today's COVID-19 pandemic:

“You turn people back to dust, saying, ‘Return to dust, you mortals.’ A thousand years in your sight are like a day that has just gone by, or like a watch in the night. Yet you sweep people away in the sleep of death—they are like the new grass of the morning: In the morning it springs up new, but by evening it is dry and withered” ([Psalm 90:3–6](#)).

So, what is God’s purpose in allowing COVID-19? Without being too dogmatic, we know that, generally speaking, one of God’s purposes in trials is to get the world’s attention off themselves and onto Him, their Creator and Savior—*which is the biggest part of the answer to the question at hand*. “Why would God allow COVID-19?” Millions are suddenly asking that question right now, believers and non-believers alike, which means that God is on their minds. God desires for all people to earnestly seek Him and find Him, discovering that He is actually close to us ([Jeremiah 29:13](#); [Acts 17:26–28](#)). God desires us to sense our own weakness and neediness so that we put our trust in Him ([2 Corinthians 12:9](#)). God desires people to fear Him with proper reverence and awe ([Proverbs 9:10](#)); to love Him more than their own lives ([Matthew 10:37](#); [John 12:25](#)); and to show love and gratitude for the Savior by loving and helping fellow humans, especially the suffering ([Romans 15:1](#); [James 2:14–17](#)). God desires to shift our focus and affection away from this temporary, troubled world to our eternal, heavenly home ([Colossians 3:1–2](#); [Hebrews 12:1–2](#)).

Times of trouble are a prime motivation for us to store up [treasures in heaven](#) rather than cling to treasures on earth ([Matthew 6:19–20](#); [Colossians 3:1–3](#)), and to be good stewards of those blessings God gives us in this life ([Luke 16:11](#); [Matthew 25:14–30](#)). God wants us to trust Him absolutely, knowing that our times are in His hand ([Psalm 31:15](#)).

Ultimately, it is the poor and hurting who seek God, not the rich and comfortable. It is danger and calamity that turn men to their Savior, not health and wealth (see [Mark 2:17](#)). It is suffering that wakes us to our true need. C. S. Lewis put it this way: “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world” (*The Problem of Pain*, HarperCollins, 1996, p. 91).

Life for all people means facing suffering, death, and their eternal destiny. Even if we develop immunity to COVID-19, we can’t escape the fact of trouble in the world.

What's best for us, in any situation, is to seek God: "Blessed are those who keep his statutes and seek him with all their heart" ([Psalm 119:2](#)).

Recommended Resource: [The Problem of Pain by C.S. Lewis](#)