



Finding Hope During COVID-19 Outbreak

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(COVID-19 has continued to affect people in South Korea and other nations since this article was submitted March 4.)

It is now 43 days since the outbreak of COVID-19, and my resident country, South Korea, is suffering. Thousands have been affected, and several have died.

Yet, the crisis has expanded our thinking to find new ways to connect.

Most infected cases are from Daegu, the fourth-largest city in South Korea, but Seoul holds much anxiety and fear. The city government implemented a two-week "social-distancing campaign" to prevent spreading the disease. We're to refrain going outdoors, avoid physical contact with others, keep in touch by using social media instead of meeting people personally, wash our hands, and wear a mask at all times.

As the number of cases grows, people continue to isolate themselves in voluntary quarantine. All schools are closed, and many companies are encouraging employees to work from home. Also, our congregation has canceled worship services and activities.

Because most people have volunteered to be self-quarantined, we are feeling trapped by our shrinking environment. This isolation hurts mental and spiritual health. The crisis is diminishing our peace, taking away

our freedom, and tempting people to regard others with suspicion.

Yet, we wondered: What if we refuse to let this crisis take away our humanity? What if we choose a different response? As our everyday life becomes restricted, what if we choose to expand our hearts and pour love freely into the world?

That's what we wanted, so we decided to try a new form of online worship on Sundays. Forty-four of our people connected by Kakao Talk (a group-chatting app popular in South Korea that is similar to Facebook Messenger). We posted a video with different elements of worship. In between worship posts, participants shared pictures and sent text messages. Afterward, the streams of posted comments offered testimony to the amazing experience we had shared.

In times like this we are given an amazing opportunity to be the people God wants us to be. I am certain that joy is the most effective way to decrease the fear around us. If I can find joy, I will be OK. If I can share joy with you, you will be OK, too!

Because joy is also infectious.

