

**Perspectivas de la Pandemia:
Personal Lessons from Covid 19
By Robert Reimers**

*“When you come out of the storm, you won’t be the same person who walked in.
That’s what this storm’s all about.”
— Haruki Murakami, Kafka on the Shore*

This is what I am starting to learn:

The future is uncertain. Change is inevitable.

It is beginning to realize that the return to normal I wish for is unlikely and that future uncertainty is greater than ever. Faith is becoming an ally much greater than ever before. Scripture describes faith as a shield (from the heat out there). Faith is placing my future in an unchanging God who also loves me. This is not a faith that things will come right (which too frequently turns out to be an unfounded wish), but rather dependence on someone who knows me and cares for me, even if I don’t come out on top at the end. “Fear not” is repeated 365 times in Scripture. What God said to Moses and Joshua he also says to us “Don’t be afraid, for the Lord will go before you and will be with you. He will not fail nor forsake you” (Deut 31:8).

Relationships matter

Lockdown has raised the value and importance of other people in my life. I look forward to meeting my absent children, or hug my grand children, or simply speak face-to-face with friends. More people than ever now greet me in the street as they pass two meters away from me. Good relationships with people are more important than things. Hopefully, I can keep this perspective when I come out on the other side of the storm.

Simplicity brings a joy of its own

I am starting to see my immediate world more clearly. I am pacing myself more reasonably. I realise I can do with far less than I thought I needed. I now take pleasure in appreciating what I simply passed by in the past. The poet W. H. Davies said, “What is this life if full care we have no time to stand and stare?” There is a certain joy in pausing and listening to my immediate world.

I need to re-invent myself. I can’t stay the same.

Our creative God has made me for creative growth. Faith is the soil for growth. For many this is an opportunity. But it is not easy. I hear of pilots retraining to become truck drivers. Office workers become fruit pickers. This redirection also takes place in our everyday lives. People show greater appreciation of others and perform random acts of kindness. I see people growing in practical application of their faith in serving their communities. During lockdown, I need to find meaningful things to do, and learn something new. Finally, I take out those things I stored for “retirement” and do them now.

Economic suffering is spilling over into social unrest.

Just as we were thinking that we could close the gap between rich and poor, the chasm has suddenly widened. Some are affected more drastically than others. Thousands are losing their jobs and closing their businesses with great heartache. Some unwisely over committed themselves. Others did not and are simply carried along the wave of change. I hear of people selling their furniture. Some are running out of food. Queues at food banks are getting longer. For some the frustration is rising and starting to spill over into anger. Will that become more frequent? Churches are stepping in and showing practical responses to people’s needs. Many of us feel humbled. There is no place for a sense of superiority. We can only be thankful for whatever we have.

The world is again becoming larger rather than shrinking.

The challenges of distance travel are likely to stay with us for many years. The cost and number of businesses and churches sending workers overseas will decline. There will be greater emphasis on cost cutting. Large office buildings or administrative centres will be digitalised and automated. This will be especially difficult for NGO's and religious organisations that may even prolong the pain by seeking to delay the inevitable. As a result, they self-inflict their demise. Evangelism is likely to become more localised, giving even more control to the local church. Who will catch the vision quickly and who will refuse to see it?

Conclusion: We need to be relevant in a fast-changing environment. Don't hold on to the past, but boldly move into the unknown future, by faith.