By Graham Ashby

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MODELLING:

If you have been watching or reading about the coronavirus (and who hasn't?), you will be familiar with the term 'modelling'.

Modelling has been the constant reference point for our Prime Minister, the Chief Medical Officer, the Civil Defense spokesperson and the Police Commissioner. They all refer to 'modelling' as the reason New Zealand is in a state of Level 4 lockdown.
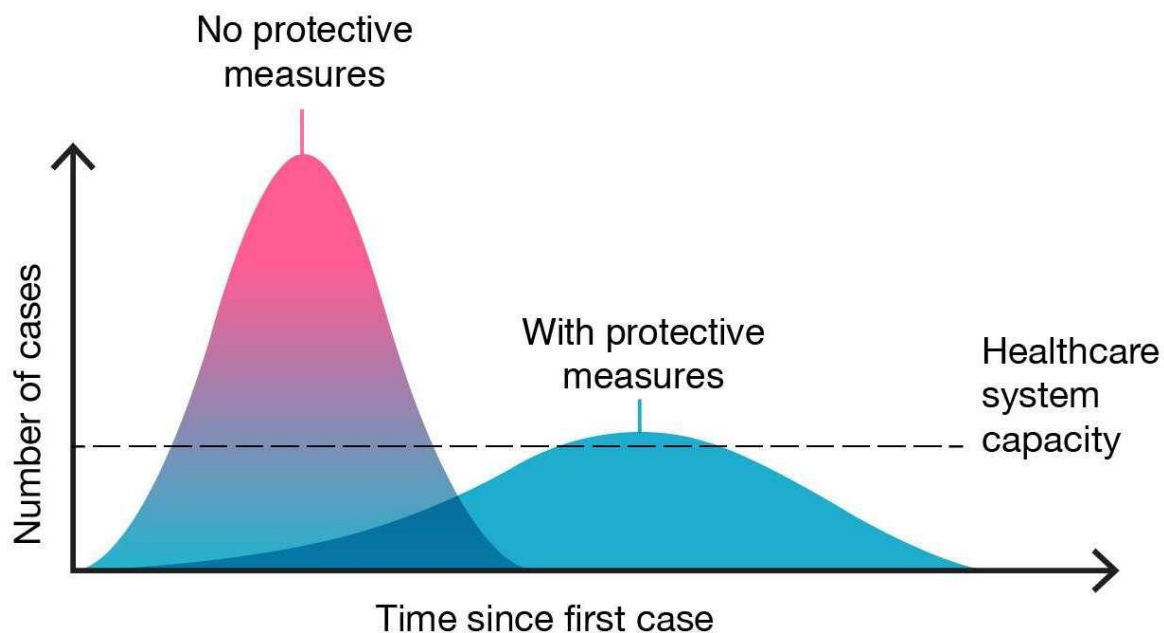
So, what is modelling?

As I understand it, 'Modelling' is when experts in their respective fields, identify, gather and record all international and national specific data, reports and known facts related to the particular issue. In our case here in New Zealand, our experts collate as much information as possible from around the world regarding the impact and effects of the coronavirus, then run that evidence through a series of 'what if' scenarios in order to gain an estimate of what could/would happen with action or inaction. What surfaces out of using modelling, is potential impacts to economies, workplaces, health systems, people etc, which then gives the government a clear indication on how best to act.

One thing has been made clear, the modelling from around the world indicates that if we leave the coronavirus unchecked, thousands of New Zealanders will die. This understanding has come as our leaders have identified how late, Italy, Spain the UK and the USA were in responding to this rapidly moving pandemic. Tragically, because those foreign governments were slow to limit the contagion, many thousands have been infected resulting in thousands of casualties. Nobody in New Zealand wants that to happen here.

Consequently, as a result of overseas models, in an unprecedented move, our government chose to be proactive by closing our country's borders and placing every New Zealander, except essential workers, into a mandatory lockdown in order to prevent the virus from spreading. Which brings me to the modelling 'curve'.

The graph below shows the 'estimates' of action and inaction.

If New Zealand had not taken prompt action, the steep curve reveals the casualty estimates (coloured in pink). Our experts believed had they made no attempt to contain the coronavirus, New Zealand would have faced a high mortality rate. This was also based on evidence and lessons learned from the 1918 Spanish Flu outbreak in New Zealand.

With appropriate action, like doing everything this country can to limit the spread of the virus, it is 'estimated' that we will not be overrun with casualties. This is what our leaders mean when they talk about 'flattening the curve.'

One of the main observations you can see in this graphic, is the expected ability of our Healthcare system. No action would mean our hospitals, doctors, nurses and emergency workers would be overwhelmed and could not properly attend to the expected huge tsunami of coronavirus cases that would come their way. However, with the right actions (to lower the curve), although there will still be people affected by the virus, the health professionals would be well within their expected capacity to handle the problem.

Modelling has enabled the government to quickly understand that by taking a "hard and fast" approach to minimalizing the impact on the COVID-19, it will, in the long-term, be for the benefit of all New Zealanders. Nevertheless, this pre-emptive action is reliant on every New Zealander respecting and honouring this decision by physically isolating and distancing themselves from other human contacts in order to stop community transmissions. The belief is, the virus can only move if people move. If we stop moving the virus stops moving and it will die. Simply put, modelling shows if we do not constrict our movements, more people will die and the curve will rise. If we do separate and cease physical connections, minimal people will die and the curve will flatten.

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This is not meant to be a politically motivated article, rather an examination on just how clever and helpful it is when such modelling and 'what if' curves are done for the welfare of a nation.

Of course, the Bible has lead the way for many millennia with the idea of modelling.

Let me give you a few examples:

Adam & Eve were our first 'models'. Their place in enjoying the presence of God was to be a model for every human who would be born. Their environment was the perfect place on earth until sin made its deceptive and disastrous entrance and paradise was lost.

As the nation of Israel was formed they were given a particular set of laws known as the Ten Commandments. As a people set apart for God, a treasured nation, a chosen people and as a prized possession they were to model God's goodness and love among them. Tragically they were seduced by foreign gods and as a consequence **their curve of immorality and arrogance hit new highs.**

Abraham, Moses, Joshua, Rahab, Samuel, Hannah, Ruth, David and other Old Testament characters were all models of how to trust God through isolation, exile, heartbreak, poverty and war. Their obedience influenced their people and brought stability, peace and joy to the entire nation.

The Old Testament prophets often had the difficult challenge of reprimanding their own people and as a result suffered rejection, beatings, torture, flames, lions and death. Yet, faithfully they modelled God's love and mercy and were a light in the darkness to their people.

When Jesus arrived and eventually began His ministry he would model everything that God wanted us to know. Jesus Christ was the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being (Heb. 12:3). It is incredible to think that Jesus, the King of heaven, would choose to become a man in order that He would demonstrate God's love to us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:8). The result would be that **the high curve of sin**, which would result in death, **was totally crushed** so that we could receive the gift of eternal life (Rom. 6:23).

The book of Acts models the early church.

The New Testament books model and explain how every Christian should conduct themselves in whatever culture and times they live. They are also very clear with what happens to those who ignore God's Words.

Over four-thousand years, the Bible authors gathered and recorded all the necessary data, stories, evidence, histories and facts in order to provide us with a trustworthy and helpful model to give us God's revelation. The Bible's 'modelling' is very clear, **IF** we obey God there will be blessings. **IF** we disobey God, there will be disasters. The Bible's great message is; **God sent His Son to flatten the curve of sin so that we could inherit eternal life. How good is that!**

The Bible sent us models to learn, believe and follow. As believers, we should model the Christ we love in order to show the world His model is best for everyone. Now is an amazing time to show our families and neighbours that we model Jesus and His words. May this be your experience even from your imposed isolation.

I'll leave the last words up to Titus, after all, he went to the backwater of Crete to preach and model Christ to the lazy and brutal pagans there. The Lord blessed his efforts in a most remarkable way. His words fit our context and culture with the modelling we should show now;

Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and always to be gentle toward everyone. (Titus 3:1)

Blessings

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