



By Graham Ashby

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RESET:

March 30, 2020, New Zealand's day fifth of the official COVID-19 lockdown.

It still seems surreal that the whole country is now confined exclusively to our homes, or in some cases Hotels. As you understand, this self-isolation is a combined national effort to eradicate the movements of COVID-19. The government is hoping our responsible actions will be effective if everyone stays within their own confines or 'bubbles'. If it works, and the virus dies out, it will 'reset' the country, we are told.

I am indeed praying for a reset. Our country and our churches have needed a reset for some time now.

My recent readings have been in the book of Ezra. This is a book that describes a huge reset for the nation of Israel. Coming back to their lands, these once captured and exiled people return and begin to reset their lives. In order to do so they ask Ezra to guide them. Ezra opens God's Word to guide them. In unity they rebuild the altar in Jerusalem and begin to lay new foundation stones for the demolished Temple. Despite opposition they press on with their building only to encounter the brick wall of their own moral disobedience to God's law. Ezra's response is to gather the people and read God's Word. Remarkably, as Ezra reads the Book of the Law, the people break down, weeping. They confess their immoral sins in public and renounce their evil practices of intermarriage. Nehemiah was present that day and said, *"Go and enjoy choice food and sweet drinks and send some to those who have nothing prepared. This day is sacred to the Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength"* (Ez. 8:10). The outcome was, collectively, God's people promised, *"We will not neglect the house of our God"* (Ez. 10:39). That day became a historical reset for every life present!

Despite our physical distancing, as a body of Christians we have a number of weeks to take the time to reset. Like no other time in our history have we ever had the chance to stop, isolate, pray, rethink and

prepare for the best way ahead. I want to encourage you to think RESET. May I be bold enough to make some suggestions:

RESET IN THE HOME:

Reset family mealtimes. No more eating in front of the TV. Talk about family life. Be affirming.

Reset Bible readings and prayer times with the family. Families that pray together stay together.

Reset manners. Let's respect each family member. Let's learn to say 'Thank you' often and mean it.

Reset attitudes. Inform your household that from now on, only positive words and actions towards each other is the new normal in your home. This is leadership.

Reset discipling your children. Spend quality time with them. Intentionally grow them in the Lord.

Reset responsibilities. Take turns to cook, wash, iron and yes, – clean the toilet. Teach your family how to sew on a button or sew a hem, check the car oil and tyre pressure, change a spark plug, change a lightbulb and pull out a weed. This is practical education where one day your future son or daughter-in-law will thank you.

Reset creativity. Make Saturday night the family concert night. Live stream to the grandparents.

Reset caring. Discuss with your family what you all can do to care for your neighbours while keeping your distance?

Reset fun times. Fly a kite, kick a ball, play board games. Learn together. Laugh together. Grow together.

Reset giving. Get the kids (adults too) to clean out their wardrobes and toys, to give to the Hospice.

RESET IN THE HEART:

Reset your time with God. Read your Bible every day. Start a Bible study. Read a Christian book. Consider doing an online Bible course. The CCCNZ Pathways Bible offers some great online courses for free! Check it out - <https://mailchi.mp/5c807ecda299/its-not-too-late-grow-in-god-pathways-can-help-6378755?e=480c88ea73>

Reset your prayers. Talk longer with the Lord. Share your challenges, hopes and aspirations with your Heavenly Father. Start praying for people by name. Keep a prayer diary and look for the answers.

Reset your gratitude. There are essential workers out there doing overtime and literally carrying the country at this time. Thank God for them. Send them a note of thanks from your family. Thank God for their commitment and ask the Lord to give them strength and surround them with His protection.

Reset your dysfunctions. What don't you do well? What needs an adjustment? What have you been avoiding? What do you pretend at? Write them down and seek to address those issues. Ask for help from a trusted friend.

Reset your expectations. Things aren't going your way? Trust God with them. Job insecurity? Trust the Lord with this. Finances being impacted? Lower all spending and tell the whole family why. Teach your children how to budget.

Reset your memory. When did you last memorize a Psalm or a series of verses? Commit to it now.

Reset your source of truth. Stop reading everybody's opinions on social media. Get back to your Bible and authors who have stood the test of time. Have the confidence that God's Word can be trusted for every situation today and tomorrow.

Reset your purity. Do not stay up late and surf the internet! Keep your integrity by choosing to never surf the web by yourself, when all in your home are asleep. Your family need you to stay morally clean.

RESET CHURCH:

Reset your care to your church leaders and administrators.

Pastor your pastor and leaders. Your Pastor and leaders are trying to cope with an unprecedented situation that nobody has ever prepared for in their lifetime. There are no books and guidelines on what to do. I will guarantee, if they are a shepherding pastor/elder/leader, that each night when they put their head on their pillow they are wondering what more can they do? They are probably asking themselves, "Have I done enough? How can I keep the flock fed, encouraged and connected? Your Pastor/elders/leaders could so easily be emotionally and spiritually overwhelmed. Please check up on them and encourage them. Now it is your turn to Pastor them.

Reset your thinking about what is the church.

What we are discovering through this nationwide seclusion is that people are important. Maybe it is time to think about how much effort goes into programming compared to the time we have or have not, put into people. As almost every church in New Zealand has realised over these last weeks, the church is not a building it is people. Right now, many in our 'Body' are hurting, confused and anxious about the unknown. The greatest comfort you can give people in your church family, right now, is to let them know they are loved.

Now is a great time to reassess all that we think the church is. What do we value the most? How can we build each other up? How can we take the message of our Lord Jesus to our communities? What can we do to connect with people, real people, hurting people, broken people? I believe people will come to us when they know we love them. In the future, they will be attracted to our sincere care, not our programmes.

Many churches are scrambling to use technology to broadcast their love and care to the people in their network. This is admirable because the current pandemic has forced so many church leaders to think connect, connect, connect. Suddenly, we need all these bright, intelligent, technology-savvy young people to show us how to connect! We have got to thank them for their gifting and their willingness to help us connect. And we have a long way to go because not everyone can use technology, but clearly, we are all learning technology is a strategic tool in keeping us connected in today's modern world.

The churches that failed to believe that Home/Life/Connect Groups had value are now overwhelmed with trying to contact and care for everyone. No one Pastor can do all that with a medium-size church family. Elders and leaders that have neglected the mid-week care of their people have almost overnight realised that had they encouraged Home/Life/Connect groups, their pastoral work right now would not be so intense. Now is a great time for every church leader to plan how every church member can be attached or associated with a smaller group where deeper, stronger ties can be made.

So, there are a few ideas that have been brooding in my head and heart for some time now.

What have I missed? What else could be added to our RESET? I look forward to your additions.

As in Ezra and Nehemiah's day, this time of international reset gives the people of God and the church of today the opportunity to break down our false idols and reset our foundations. Now we have the time to read God's Word and to individually and collectively confess our sins. Now is the time to experience God's presence and to daily say, "The Lord is my strength." Like what happened in Israel's history, this period of being set apart could be the most historic time of revival for the modern church as we commit to not neglecting the house of our God. Where is the house of our God? *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"* (1 Cor. 3:16). Now there is a reset worthy of our pursuit.

Blessings

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