

OpenTheo

What Big Questions Can We Be Asking? | Beyond the Forum Edition

July 22, 2021



The Veritas Forum

From the archives we bring you our first ever Virtual Veritas Forum. We hear from a panel that includes Lydia Dugdale, MD and Director of Columbia Center for Clinical Medical Ethics; David Brooks, bestselling author and NYT cultural commentator; and Andy Crouch, executive editor of Christianity Today, author, and partner at Praxis Labs. Moderated by executive director of The Veritas Forum, Andrew Schuman. You can check out our new podcast, Beyond the Forum, wherever you listen to podcasts. Please like, share, subscribe to, and review this podcast. Thank you!

Transcript

Hi, this is Carly Eshleman, the assistant producer of Beyond the Forum, a new podcast available now from the Veritas Forum and PRX. The Forum you're about to listen to is featured in Beyond the Forum's first season on The Good Life. We interviewed Dr. Lydia Dugdale, one of the presenters you're about to listen to, for episode one of our first season.

And we talked with her about how living well means we also have to die well. You can listen to our interview with Lydia, access full show notes, and learn more about the rest of our lives. And we're going to talk about the first season of our first season by visiting beyondtheforum.org. Thanks for listening and enjoy the Forum.

Welcome to The Veritas Forum. This is the Veritas Forum Podcast, a place where ideas and beliefs converge. What I'm really going to be watching is which one has the resources in their worldview to be tolerant, respectful, and humble toward the people they disagree with.

Whether the lives that we're living are meaningful. If energy, light, gravity, and consciousness are a mystery, don't be surprised if you're going to get an element of this in God. Today we reach back into our archives and bring you our first ever virtual Veritas Forum.

Hosted by the Veritaas Forum on March 24th and co-sponsored by over 70 partners and attended by more than 3,000 viewers across the globe, with a panel including Medical Dr. Lydia Dugdale, the Director of the Columbia Center for Clinical Medical Ethics, as well as best-selling author and New York Times cultural commentator, David Brooks, and Andy Crouch, the Executive Editor of Christianity Today and a partner at Praxis Labs, moderated by the Veritaas Executive Director, Andrew Schumann. Together they discuss the coronavirus and quarantine. What big questions can we be asking? Let me get started.

First, just welcome. Welcome to our first virtual Veritaas Forum. My name is Andrew Schumann.

I'm the Executive Director of Veritaas. And while we've held forums on hundreds of campuses around the world in-person forums, that raise the big questions of life and try to connect those questions to the life and the story and the person of Christ, we have never hosted a virtual forum before. So this is our made-in voyage.

We're thankful to be here, thankful to be doing this, and really appreciate all of our partners. So let me just thank all of our co-sponsors. Over the last week, 75 partner organizations have jumped in with us to make this conversation possible.

So I just want to thank you. It is a privilege to work alongside you. Many of you we've been working with for 10 years, 20 years, and to adapt with you to this context to serve students, to serve faculty, serve the university community is a huge privilege.

So thank you. Before I launch, I also want to thank the Veritaas team, so that our media team, our forums team, our Augusting Collective team, our Asia team have collectively been basically working around the clock to kind of get this format up and running, to publicize it and to gather what we hope will be over the next hour and a half, a really meaningful conversation about a topic that I think a lot of us are feeling pretty sober about and looking through wisdom. So we're going to try it over the next hour and a half to just seek truth together, which is what we do here at Veritaas.

And it's really in times like these that we feel like we need to be coming together and need to be pursuing wisdom and truth together. And so we've invited three people that we just love and really couldn't think of three better people as we were preparing this to weigh in at this time at this kind of early stage of this unfolding pandemic. And so I'd like to introduce them now.

Their bios will show up in the chat. So I'm not going to kind of rehearse the full bios, but I would like to invite them to join us. So first, I'd like to welcome Lydia Dugdale.

Lydia comes to us from New York City where she serves as a doctor and is fresh off of the COVID-19 clinic. Thank you. So let me introduce also Andy, Andy Crouch.

So glad you can join us. Thanks for making the time. Andy serves as a praxis engine for an active entrepreneurship.

Andy, thank you for joining us. Thank you Andrew. That's great to be part of this tonight.

So glad you're here. And then finally David, David Brooks comes from the New York Times where he writes a lot about the American social and moral fabric. David, thank you so much for being here with us.

You're with my old student. I am. I am.

I, one of my, I was taking David's class. And so we should talk about commitments because that's, that's what the class is on. And I think we have a lot of questions about our commitments right now.

So, hopefully we can dive into that. Where I'd like to start because this last week has been kind of as strange as it has been. I'd actually love to ask each of our panelists.

You know, where are you right now? And then what is your last week looks like as you've adjusted to this kind of new normal. So Lydia, let's, let's start with you. Andrew, just to clarify the question you're asking about physical location or headspace.

Physical location is kind of what I was thinking. So, yeah, I am in my apartment in New York City. This is the library slash guest room slash office.

That's where I am. And it's great to be here with everyone tonight. And then what what is the last week kind of looked like for you as you've been adjusting.

Things are really taking off here for those of you who are following the coronavirus sort of stats regularly you know that New York City is pretty bad off. Things are under control but very busy. And, but we're still very much on the upward tick.

And so I expect it just to. It's going to continue. So, yeah, I was, I was in the clinic today taking care of patients so yes very busy.

No, thank you. Andy, what, how are things with you. Well, I'm in Swarthmore Pennsylvania, which is just outside of Philadelphia, which is where we've lived for many years.

My wife teaches at a college called Swarthmore College here. And so I'm in the basement office where I always spend a fair amount of time. I would say what the last week has been like has been way more obsessive refreshing of various screens than I have ever wanted to be true of me in my life.

Punctuated by some really encouraging conversations. I get to work with entrepreneurs in my day job now. And if there's one group of people you want to be with right now it's

entrepreneurs because they're risk tolerant.

They see opportunity. They're not highly invested in the way things were. They want to see things change anyway.

And so there's actually a lot of sense of opportunity even in the midst of tremendous sobriety and concern and bewilderment. So all those, all those things have been part of my life for the past week or so. Thank you.

David, how, how was you? I'm on the eastern shore of Maryland about 90 minutes east of DC where I just happened to get a home three weeks ago which is why there are a lot of people shelves behind me. And it's been a blessing because about your nature. I can see the water.

I can bring in my son and couple friends or a group of five. We're going to wear it. Whether this out together and that's been good to have that kind of community.

And so I spend my mornings furiously writing the way I always do. I think nothing but this virus and social and moral consequences of it. And then the other half of my life I lead something called we the social fabric projects out of the Aspen Institute.

And that's really a league of tremendous community builders people are phenomenal at relationship and they're struggling in part because they're all extroverts and they're fantastic relationship and now they're trying to do that from face time. And so I spend my afternoons. We're trying to figure out, you know, one of the upsides of this whole deal is that social connection and social capital are very much on everybody's mind.

And so we're trying to figure out how that can be nurtured even at time like this. Yeah, I mean, I mean, I can't wait to dive into that. And let's let's start with some sense of the medical context because that does I mean, you're like me you're kind of on your Twitter feed trying to figure out like is the curve flattening and where are we and all of that and so maybe we can start there.

Lydia, why don't we start with you. How are you making sense of sort of COVID-19 from a medical standpoint. Yeah, what what is kind of the latest looking like from your vantage point.

Yeah, so you all know that, you know, it's everywhere, more than 166 countries 400,000 people have been sick. Probably many more than that because of testing limitations. We think by 18,000 or so have died.

Things like things are leveling off in Asia. I think it remains to be seen if that is permanent is the Chinese especially start to go back to work. We're going to have to see if things spike again.

I think no one is sure if if anybody's really truly leveling, or if if it'll if it'll sort of jump. Testing remains a problem and some of you, we were talking earlier. Some of you know that if you're young and healthy and feel sick and feel like you might have the symptoms of COVID-19.

We're not testing. We just there's such a limitation on tests. So, you know, if you feel sick and you Google the symptoms and you think you have them, you probably do.

You know, you have to stay home and keep your germs to yourself. I'd say that in terms of, you know, where the hospitals are there's a lot of actually it's pretty incredible. Andy talk about, you know, innovation and ingenuity.

I, I've been pretty impressed by what the hospitals have been doing to try to come up with. All kinds of plans on the works from testing medications that hadn't previously been thought to be useful for this particular type of virus to innovating with ventilator technology. There's just been a lot of creativity.

And so I think people are working really hard. Unfortunately, there's the flip side of theft and hoarding theft from hospitals of basic protective equipment has been a problem sort of across the country and I assume probably in other countries as well. And, you know, the, the, the medical advice of social distancing and washing hands and coughing into your elbow.

All of that is, you know, there's good reason for it. We do. You know, we do worry about it with a cough or sneeze droplets project about six feet.

So that's, that's the reason for the six feet rule. So all those things that you've heard, they're not just arbitrary. And they do tend to reduce spread.

But there's, and, and we'll get to it. There's also a lot that we can do to be relational. And I think David, you alluded to this too to be relational during this time.

So I hope we dig into that a little bit more. Yeah, well, thank you for kind of setting setting the table that way Lydia. David, I'd love to go to you and sort of from a historical cultural perspective.

How unique is this what's going on, you know, that's going on right now. You know, are there other historical precedents that you found helpful for kind of understanding what is happening or is this, are we totally an uncharted territory. No, unfortunately we're not.

There've been plagues for as long as human history. If anybody read the parables telecity's more that the Athenians got to play retin the middle of wartime it ended up killing parables. The black death in 1665 London.

We've had this 1918 was the big one. And unfortunately the historical record on that is

not good. Whenever you read about writings of people in play time and endemic time.

They are shocked by how much human connection gets destroyed. And that people become suspicious of each other. Daniel Defoe writes about this.

Samuel Peeps that even parents begin to abandon their own children. It's just a very unpleasant repertoire because it's the magical combination of high fear with high fear of others and isolation. These are bad combination.

And I've always wondered 1918 killed 675,000 Americans and that would you know how many people worldwide in the tens of millions. And it left no cultural imprint. There are very few books written about it.

There are very few plays written about it. No movies made almost. And I always wondered why is that because we only 53,000 Americans died in World War I. So, you know, basically a sixth.

And I think one possible reason is that people were ashamed of how they behaved and how they pulled inward. And so the historical record is not good, but the thing to point out is that's a choice. And that's a choice.

We have a chance to change. And through the actions we take, we can make this an occasion where we are experiencing something together and we can make this an occasion where we had to be set apart to realize how much we feel together. And that's something that we can do together.

And can I ask David a follow up question. Yeah, please, please. All right, this is off the script.

What David, do you think that the rolling into the 20s and the sort of period of affluence the 1920s brought for America sort of changed changed the conversation. Well, it could have, it could have been, you know, 1918 was a pretty big year, you have the Russian Revolution, you have the ending of World War I. And so there were a lot of big news events, but more human lives were fixed by the, by the plague than by the flu than just about anything else. Maybe any ministry.

And I think what it does, if it, if you could tie it to anything in the later period, a sense of meaninglessness that there was a sense in the 20s, either becomes the war because of the flu that the old values, the great sense that life has meaning. That sort of washed away and so you got the lost generation, you know, the famous past in our apprentice having ways notable farewell the arms, that are all these words we used to believe in like courage and honor. We don't believe in those words anymore.

And so one of the things that does happen in a pandemic is, you know, you may be safe but your neighbor may die like where's the logic and all that. And so there's a great crisis

of meaning that has to be filled into. I think that's very important and I wonder if part of the reason for the lack of historical memory or cultural memory, as opposed to the war, the great war and then, of course, the Second World War, wars are at least narrated.

Well, they're narrated going in and coming out with meaning, right? I mean, whether or not that story is always written by the victors and it's always partial, but we do tell stories to ourselves about what the meaning of that conflict was and why our side was right if we're on the winning side or if we feel guilt, we have to wrestle with it. It's harder to easily assign meaning to this kind of phenomenon. And I wonder if that's part of it.

I also would say, Andrea, in terms of the context, it's really, it's very sobering and appealing to imagine ourselves as being in 1918, that is the smash food lasted for about three seasons, 1918 to 1920. And of course, it's quite daunting to realize this might not be a matter of weeks, but a matter of a couple of years. But I've really been haunted by the idea that actually our world historical situation that's more comparable is 1914.

1914 being the year, of course, when Archduke Franz Ferdinand was assassinated and within a few months, the world had descended into war. I don't know that we have any particular reason to foresee that right now. But the thing about 1914 is no one saw really what was coming.

No one could imagine this kind of double whammy of the Great War, which in particular reshaped Europe. America's historical memory of the Great War is very thin, but it really is the most consequential conflict, I think, of the 20th century. And then that that was going to be followed on its heels by this worldwide pandemic.

And by 1920, everything had changed in many significant ways. And there, the world of 1914 was no more. The moral world, the religious world, I think it's not too strong to say this is the moment when Europe stopped believing in God was the Great War and it's aftermath.

And so we really may need to think about that level of civilizational transformation that will come on the heels of this, rather than just, which would be plenty. Just think about, okay, how do we get through three years of plague. I think we may be in for more like five or six years of profound cultural reset.

Can I, I would love to dive in maybe Andy, begin with you even commenting a little more on that. When you think about the the risks I mean David's written about some of the risks and the moral social risk that we have, or could be looking at here, imminently. What risks do you see or kind of worry you about what, you know, how this can unfold.

I suppose one risk is a kind of freezing of global, of the global economy in the broadest sense I'm not overly attached, just a mere numbers or mere dollars, but economy and its original broader meaning is all the ways that we steward the world together and it's, as a

Christian, I understand our kind of human vocation is to make something of the world. And we do that in the broadest sense economically through shared activity that exchanges value. And we may be not just in the midst of a kind of two weeks cessation in that, but a multi year cessation in being able to have that kind of healthy creation of value together.

So that's certainly a very significant risk. The flip side is is too quick of an unfreezing that is in the desperation to jumpstart and restart the economy. We really don't attend to the public health realities of what it will take the amount of suffering we're going to have to bear and the amount of the amount of patience.

We are going to have to have to have this not be really quite cataclysmic from a health perspective. And if we decide we just can't bear it. We can't wait to get back out reconnect with people, get back to work, get the economy, the money economy flowing again.

And we decide we're going to sacrifice a lot of lives and cripple healthcare systems. I think that will lead to a real, it's kind of the moral failure that I think David was alluding to people just are deeply ashamed of the way that they behave when they become nakedly utilitarian and we just decide we're just going to have to let a lot of people, most of them older, most of them sicker parish so that we can live. And I think the Roaring 20s were kind of a subconscious working out of that frenzied kind of failure to reckon with what had been sacrificed.

So those would be like big world historical and then I would also say, just in these weeks at the very personal level, our own addictions, our own conflicts with the people closest to us, the people we most want to love, but we find hardest to love, like just the intense crucible of basically all being monks for a while and the two things monks have so much trouble dealing with is solitude on the one hand and other monks on the other hand. Those are and the rule of St Benedict and the rules of the the master is to help people deal with the tremendous crucible of solitude and silence and inactivity and the tremendous crucible of being just right up against other people you can't get away from. So, each of us, whatever happens kind of world historically, each of us is really in a crucible of discovering what we're made of for better and for worse.

David, I'd love your thoughts on that I mean you've written about sort of what social distancing might kind of end up doing to us. Yeah, well, what are your thoughts about some of the risks that Rick hasn't been depressing enough. Yeah, I guess I'm where I've been looking reading a lot about national resilience and how countries hold together and countries that hold together in times of threat, have go into those situations with certain qualities.

They have high social trust they have high faith in their institutions. They have integrated peoples and sort of a sense of togetherness and a common national narrative.

And we pretty much have none of those things right now.

So that's my anxiety I've been I've been reading about London during the war and how they presided during the blitz the bombing in 1940 was the classic example of a case where a country really pulled together. So, beginning one of the cheerful things is when you read the war planning before the bombing happened, they made estimates of what it would be like, and they were all vastly more terrible and it turned out to be. I think their dread influence them in that direction.

But and then what they did was they did a bunch of things one they gave people a sense of agency, which was here we are doing something about this they shot anti aircraft guns at the plant the German planes, which had no hope of shooting down an airplane. And so many people feel good that we were shooting back. And the second thing they did was intense social connection.

So people had to sleep, you know, basically together in these tiny little shelters and it gave them a sense of intimacy. And then they had a sense of moral meaning. Church will turn them into sort of sort of the heroes of a story, which was fighting back fascism.

And so they have all this and it's a good example of how you turn what seems to be a terrible event that's going to drop people every crazy into a memory you can actually feel good about yourself. And I'm actually I like to close I'm going to ask Lydia to unrelated questions but they're on my mind. So I'm going to be selfish.

The first is an Andy talked about the shutting, whether we're going to go back to normal too soon. But as I understand that there's no on off switch to this thing that we can go to a system where there are a whole variety of measures we can use to mitigate the spread and hopefully get to a sort of track and trace where we identify who's infectious and then are much more supple in how we respond and I gather that's what's your end of the earth Singapore and other countries have done. I'm very curious how close we are to having the capacity to do to do something like that.

So it's not a total shutdown but a much more targeted mitigation. You're going to give me your questions one at a time. I'll give you my second one now.

It's completely unrelated and let's go on and attend it. Let's go on and attend. I mean track and trace I think to my knowledge has stopped in New York because it's just it's way it's way bigger than that.

So I don't know that track and trace is going to continue much longer the numbers are just getting too high. Yeah, and I but but why don't you ask your second question. This is for Andy too.

I understand in triage. I understand why from utilitarian health perspective, you want to sort of abandon the people who are old and weak and focus your attention on the people

who have higher chance of survival. I don't understand why that logic works from a Christian perspective.

You say that one Andy you want me to. You can you can go first lady. I mean, it's interesting because when you start labeling you know people so I'm a medical ethicist right so when people start using the language strict utilitarian and it's used in this very sort of harsh almost judgmental way.

At the same time when the choices we keep people alive, or we use scarce resources for people who won't benefit. You tell me what doctors are supposed to do, you know, I mean we want we want people to live. We want to help as many people as possible that's the way we're wired.

I mean, especially people who work in health care. And so to to try to relieve the suffering and our goal is to relieve everyone suffering right so even if even if it is not possible to to save a person's life who's suffering from advanced stress for tortoise stress, there we still have ways to help people be comfortable so we're not you know we're not aspiring to care for some and not care for others that's not the goal. We care for everyone.

It's just that at some point, maybe we're not at all there. It may be that technology. We have to figure out who gets the technology and who doesn't.

But I think the minute that we, we call it, you know, this sort of hard utilitarian logic. It sounds like it's just it's a game changer and I don't think that's what what we're after. For the language matter.

Let's jump over to Andy Andy you've had a little time to think think about David's question. What's between the inevitable allocation of resources that's necessary in any situation of a stressed system right wartime triage or this may get to the point of wartime and I would never want to. Can't imagine being in that position but I would never want to armchair quarterback that.

I think there's another kind of utilitarianism that we're at risk of, which is deciding that we just can't bear suffering of a more generalized sort as a society enough to give the public health system the room it needs to adapt. And that's a very different thing from a doctor making a tough decision and in a hallway about who gets to be wheeled into the specialized room and who doesn't. That's our whole society kind of either throwing up our hands and giving up or saying, no actually we are going to just bear a great deal more than we thought we could for the sake of in the long run, saving, saving lives and, and not committing a kind of act of moral, a moral outrage.

I've been thinking about this idea that's come out of the study of soldiers and more which which you guys are all very familiar with the idea of moral injury, which is the idea

of just having been present for the, the committing of acts that were violent and violating is really difficult for human beings to bear and there's two categories one is where you committed some atrocity in some direct way. And that does sometimes happen and you are you have some sense of agency and responsibility, but there's also this other kind of thing which I wouldn't call guilt but more horror like moral horror that I had to watch while this happened, even though I had no direct responsibility for it. And I think we're going to need as a culture ways to handle potentially both kinds of moral injury.

And in a sense, the question will be how will we, how will we come to some sense of purification from what had to happen around us, even the best case would have to happen. And then certainly the worst case if we end up in retrospect realizing we let a lot of people die, who maybe didn't have to in order for us to have something, a sense of safety or control or whatever. Can I push back on this? Of course, of course.

So I have a concern and I, you know, the Wall Street Journal published on this yesterday and it's been kind of coming up quite a bit but I have a concern that we, and you touched on economy first so I'm going to sort of circle back because this is related, but that is what we're doing by shutting everything down with the hopes of mitigating spread which for sure it mitigates some spread, and actually trying to flatten the curve so for sure we want to try to keep people out of the healthcare systems because we don't want to over tax them, and they're quickly approaching that point. But the long term consequences of completely shutting down the global economy, what this is going to do to suicide, to opioid addiction, to, you know, alcohol addiction, to keep the go back to college because their parents lost their jobs and they can't afford the tuition. I mean, the downstream, and these are all health, health, right, because at the end of the day we know that socioeconomic status, education level, those are all correlate with health.

And there's tons of tons of literature to show this. So if we're thinking that all of these, what we're doing with the economy and these efforts to, to save lives now which as a position I completely agree with. And I, and I agree with the public health measures, it's intention, it's intention with these long term adverse health outcomes that we're going to see.

And I'd be curious, just just in your comments now about sort of you started to say, sort of having to wrestle with this from a public health perspective. Is it that we actually need to accept human finitude and say we can't save everybody. Because we're going to be destroying the next generation.

My, my 10 year old daughter was sitting with an economist friend of ours and she said, well, what do you mean they want to spend \$2 trillion to bail things out. Who's going to pay for that. And our economist friends that you are, you know, it's going to be on the next generation to figure out.

So, so, so all of it is about human life. Right. We care desperately about, we don't want people to die.

We want people to live, but we want people to live in flourish. And right now sort of the current situation is not leading to human flourishing either. It's helping to mitigate the overwhelmed hospitals, but it's not leading to human flourishing.

So, I don't know, I'm sending it back to you. I'm with you. I've been saying to some friends, there's more ways to die than COVID-19.

And one is total isolation. That is a, that is a death sentence for a lot of people. So it's, that's why I sort of think of it as moral horror, like that we're, we're going to live through no matter what course we take we're going to live through something that's really tough to bear.

I think there are more and less moral ways to live through it. And if we don't get the economic bounce back that the 1918 flu pandemic saw in 1920. We're not, we're not, I don't think there's, I think it's going to get really bad.

But I'm not, I'm not trying to be prophetic here. I just, yeah, I don't know, David, do you want to weigh in on this? I was about to say the same thing. I mean, how do you begin to, I mean, it's trade offs.

I mean, it's, you're, you're balancing really tough trade offs. How do you begin to think your way through that? So yeah, David. Well, it's a decision to make every day.

And right now the decision is clear. The total shutdown that we're doing, it seems to me for the next two months or at least six weeks is the right thing to do. I mean, there could be a rise in suicide.

I worry about isolation has really bad effects on the immune system. And so I worry about that. Like the efforts we take to reduce the number of people get the disease makes the people get it possibly more likely to really suffer from it.

And so all those downstream effects of solitude are real, but right now they're not anything like the effects of a runaway pandemic. And so right now I think our course is very clear and I think the president is making a mistake and talking about a plus 15 and things like that. But then as we get further down the road.

I mean, I, maybe I misunderstand this but the, the, the friend of mine you ball of in wrote that we need to hard stop and then a, and then a slow open. And so we had to hard stop the economy right now to just to call this right but then gradually we begin to open things up. As, as we get hopefully a little better grip I remain.

Maybe it's just my nature I mean more optimistic than most people that it'll be short

shorter than we think. I have no medical basis it's just my nature to think that way. And so, but I would like to see, you know, parts of the economy open up I think a lot about what it will be like when a lot of people have had the disease and are at least temporarily immune.

And they're out partying and the rest of us are self isolated or self distancing out that becomes much harder self distance when half your friends are out partying. And so I think about those downstream effects but I think, I think my own instinct is that this will be with us for a long time, but not at the severity that we think it is. Well, let's let's kind of jump off that then and I would like about 10 minutes or so we'll turn it to the Q and A which is robust.

There are close to 3000 people that have joined. So, you know, thank you to everyone who's joined. And before I ask my next question actually a quick housekeeping piece that just came came in.

If for whatever chance the zoom platform decides it can't hold 3000 people and decides to crash, which I don't think it will, but if it does, you will immediately receive an email in your inbox about how to call in. And so we'll just sort of take the whole thing audio. So if that does happen, that's the contingency.

Look for email, but nothing's happening bad yet so let's let's keep going. On the more sort of hopeful kind of maybe maybe optimistic, maybe just hope. What are some things you guys are seeing that are kind of providing glimmers of, you know, of another story of perhaps virtue of an awakening spiritual awakening or other that you're beginning to see, maybe very at a very, very small scale possibly I'll go first time Mr Pollyanna here.

Yeah, so one, we are having we're all having this kind of conversation about very deep big things. And about meaning and Lydia wrote about death and dying well and we're having that conversation about about momentum worry about like, what's the point of living in the face of death is my life been worthwhile. Am I ready to die those kinds of questions.

Second, I think we're seeing awesome amounts of social innovation as people figure out ways to get together and I've been on the phone with psychologists and psychiatrists for the past couple days. And they're suddenly very high on face fine. And Andy and I are somewhat tech skeptics but they think FaceTime can give you the visual recognition of eyes and mouth they really need for connection.

And they've given me advice like, ask somebody how they're coping with the crisis and then sit silently for 90 seconds while we all sit through and think through what the other person just said. And so that kind of procedure you really can make somebody feel known and understood. And then they're all the, you know, they're all the ways people are finding to you and reach other.

There was a whole lady who was stuck in her home alone so neighborhood kids brought their chattels over a front yard and started playing a concert for her. And I've got it. My weave organization has sort of a clearing house of this sorts of activity it's it's called weverse 2020.org. And if you go there you can find ways to connect with other people and we're trying to be a facilitator for those kind of connection.

And then the final thing I'll say is I really get in the sense that there's a lot of people when this is over don't want to go back to the way we used to be. Exactly. Not want to tolerate the kind of divisions we lived with.

And so I'm trying to think of a series of festivals when it comes out and Andy referenced this called the Great Reset. And where we just try to reset the way we've been living. And one of the things we are very bad at is rituals and rituals are transitional moments where you do something physical that symbolizes the inward change that you're about to go through.

And so I think when this is when it's finally safe to get back together again, there'll be a hunger for that. But then I think there'll be a hunger to to live a more interconnected life. Mm hmm.

Love it. I mean, I said some rather sorry to cut you off. No, I'm not at all just going to throw it over to you.

I said some other dire things or big picture, you know, huge. I mean, we're talking about the risks. Well, those are the risks.

I'm actually very hopeful as well. On a couple of grounds. In addition to what you said, David, I think just just the chance to ask.

Was it really that great was was normal that great. And do I want do I just want to somehow flee back to the normal we had or is there something better out there for us as a as a society for me as an individual. I think, at least in this moment, the recovery of just local relationships.

It's so easy in a technological world to live sort of floating above the local, the embodied that like five blocks in any direction that you can walk and be with people and just the chance to reconnect locally. I think it's quite plausible that there will be a whole season here where many of us will be limited to groups of about 10, maybe 50, probably not more than that. And I actually think that's the building block of real community 10 is a great number.

It's a number where you actually can attend to each face and each person and no other feeling kind of simultaneously. As a Christian, I'm really interested what happens to expressions of church. And I think beautiful things happen in really big kind of in cathedrals, you might say, where there's huge gatherings, but, but the chance to

rethink.

So how do we do this in groups of 10 could be hugely hugely beneficial. So I see a lot of reason to be quite hopeful about what comes out of this in terms of the way we rebuild our lives together for the long run. Lydia, what are you, what are you kind of seeing from your vantage point.

With a group of medical students today and well, virtually. And it was interesting. A lot of different things came up.

I think a real sense and a hunger to to bridge the divides like David mentioned. They're definitely organizing, organizing going around finding neighbors in the building who might eat groceries delivered or pharmaceuticals picked up from the pharmacy, things like that. There's been a tremendous effort.

Actually, I have a bunch of emails to read after this to figure out how to there's whole networks of quilters and seamstresses who are trying to figure out how to sew masks to use in clinical settings because there are supply shortages. And then I, you know, and something that my students brought up today is this as, as Jen ziers kind of being aware of their mortality in ways that they had never really thought about it before sort of reassessing life. Would I have gone to medical school if I thought I would die in the next few years.

What I have, am I so glad I did. Have I made the right decisions what matters to me. Some of my medical students went home for spring break and then decided to come back to New York, even though they're not having, they're having class online, but they felt that they had committed to the community here.

And so they wanted to be back in New York, because it's where their community is now and it's the life they've been building, as opposed to being home somewhere with mom and dad. Others felt that the need was to go home and really invest in those relationships and to make sure that they're there. So I think this idea of assessing our, assessing what matters to us in light of our finitude and light of the fact that, actually, this is a wake up call.

All of us will die. And that's one thing that hasn't come up to this conversation is that mortality has always been 100%. Right.

So, aren't you working on that, Lodia? This is my work on it. So anyway, I've just been, I've been grateful for the conversations I've been able to have with friends and family about what matters, what matters to us and how we're going to reassess our lives going forward our relationships going forward our commitments, our work in light of sort of the big picture and in light of our own mortality. So I think that's given us a good opportunity.

It's been fantastic that thank you guys for that. Oh, Andy. I tell a quick story, because I think it's relevant even to this particular audience of Veritas Forum.

My first year out of college was the worst year of my life for many, many reasons. And among those were health issues and I ended up with pneumonia. And it's interesting.

I haven't really thought about it in this context until until just now, but I didn't have, I was never hospitalized. It was a relatively mild case. I was young, but I was on my back for two weeks with pneumonia in this little apartment in a new city, knowing nobody.

And it really was the moment I was 21 years old. It was the moment when I first in my life really realized one day I'm going to lie down in a bed like this with some illness and I won't get up. And I had to think about what, what actually mattered.

And it was absolutely defining for the rest of my life. I would say those two weeks in the midst of what in my whole life was the worst year of my life to this day. Nothing that's happening around us to me is as emotionally like dislocating as what I went through that year.

And I, I mean, I, I lay there and I thought, okay, I, I'm a Christian. So I think in some sense, the kingdom of God is what matters most is, is God actually acting in the world? If God is, how can I be part of it? What's the kingdom about? I think it's about love. I want my life to be about love.

All these other ambitions kind of evaporated. And suddenly I had this ambition to actually invest in love. And then I asked myself, well, how do you do that? And, and that in some ways has been like the quest of the rest of my life is to orient my whole life around investing in love and ideally love that outlast my own life.

So I wouldn't wish what that, what that two weeks was like on anyone, even though I know many of us will go through something like that if we get this disease and get sick from it. But, but boy, it was a life changing thing for me. There's a great line in a hidden life, which I'm going to mangle.

Maybe Andy or that he remembers it. It's one to stop putting survival at the top of your priority list. It's very freeing and really mangling that line.

But I would say, once you put certainty, once you get past certainty, like we take it for granted that our life is going to proceed in a certain way. Yes. And what this does is it rocks that.

And so once, and once you get beyond certainty, it's actually kind of liberating in a way. And I would say the second thing is, is not forgotten what my second point was so I'll come back to it, but it was brilliant. The first point is a great segue to the A. So, so that's, that's, let's do that.

So a lot of the things we've been doing at Barrett's us and I know our partner, co sponsoring organizations are a lot closer to the ground. Just been talking to students a lot and we've been in our interviewing students every day and doing this Instagram feature featuring some of their questions and their stories and I think that's pretty pervasive right now is the sense of kind of the world that you thought you were entering into you're preparing for. It's just not there in the same way.

And in the hardest part is just kind of confused. It's a little bit confusing in what ways it's there and what ways it's not. But this profoundly unsettling, you know, experience.

And so I'd love to just, you know, turn to some of the student questions that we're seeing. And so let me just kind of pick a few from the top here. One of them is about kind of the ways that this pandemic may affect how social social questions, whether it's questions around how we view who is kind of an in tribe or out tribe or the ways we've traditionally defined ourselves and the question here is, you know, does it accelerate the trends towards the spread of the virus, or is it the kind of things that we've been seeing before the virus, or kind of not.

How might this sort of play into some of those things we have been trying to work on as a society and as a church. Andy, go to you first on that. I think we know I certainly I don't even know that I have a bias or a leaning.

I will say I think there's one potentially very powerful thing, which is that this is playing out in such a compressed fashion because of globalization. So quickly everywhere. It's not like it starts in distant Arabia like the black death and, you know, a century later lands on the shores of Europe it's all happening before our eyes.

And we're seeing the in a sense the peoples of the world deal with it. And we're seeing that this is affecting every human community. They're each dealing with it with their own cultural resources, many of which are incredibly admirable in quite different ways the Italians singing to each other in, you know, from their balconies and the in South Korea the incredible just sense of social solidarity and commitment to the world.

And of course we all wear masks because that's the way we serve one another and honor one another and protect each other. I think we could come out of it seeing the sort of deep reserves of cultural richness in each of the nations of the world in a very encouraging way. And I think it might humanize people who might have seemed distant or alien.

I could also tell you a much less hopeful story, because a lot of it is in our hands. It's in our hands as to what stories we pass on, what we model what what posture we ourselves have. It's very hard to say the long term results of this.

Next one Lydia. So you've done a lot of research on sort of how you know you latest

book is on the art of dying and kind of recovering the ways people have thought about that. We have a question here says this is not the first time God's people face pandemics hardship, etc.

And certainly that is very, very true. And then the question is what can we learn from the Saints past as we face the coming months. That's a great question.

I was actually thinking about earlier Andy when you were talking about the last generation. And I so my work has been really focused on the bubonic plague in the mid 1300s that struck Western Europe. And the aftermath of that and that outbreak of the plague historians vary in their estimates and of course we can't really know how many people died, you know, 700 years ago, but up to possibly two thirds of the population died from the plague.

And David, I know in your recent column you wrote about Bocaccio and Bocaccio is Bocaccio lived through the this particular outbreak and then his book that a camera on describes in the introduction, just what it was like in Venice during that time. But my point in telling you that is that actually what happened thereafter was then this this sort of cry on the part of the people, the lady really because the Catholic Church was leading social structure at the time. There's this cry for help to know how to anticipate and prepare for death and sort of to walk through that.

And they're developed afterwards this enormous body of literature called the art of dying the *Ars Mauryen de* in Latin was very, very popular for more than 500 years and really itself died out around World War One and a World War One. And that's when we sort of lost that art of dying tradition, but it's interesting to see that and it was it didn't happen immediately, but after that massive outbreak, there was this sense of solidarity where people came together with this sort of common cry and insisted on it until the authorities delivered on it and then of course after the Catholic Church sort of we think came up with the first version, then there were many spin offs that were sort of adapted. So I think that there's a possibility of looking to various traditions that are already there that have been well worked out over time for guidance on this.

In terms of specific saints, I'm no expert on saints. I have been, I've, one of the chapters of my book focuses quite a bit on Saint Anthony and his overcoming attacks by demons in the wilderness that were setting out to destroy his, you know, his faith and his soul. Certainly, there is much to be learned from studying those who've gone before us and sort of held steadfastly in the face of adversity, whether saints or markers.

I think there's much we can learn from them. And Andy I know you've written some recently on kind of the, the, this perspective of exile that we get from the Old Testament and how helpful that can be at times like this could you just, could you share a little bit of a shot. And so in some ways unique thing about the Jewish and Christian faiths is the belief that God is active in the contingencies of history.

Many other religions don't quite see God or the gods as present in that way. And one of the most unique things is the belief that God is active in the midst of the worst contingencies. And you know what we're facing.

There have been moments I think where anyone listening to this would feel kind of vertical like, oh my goodness, this could be really horrible. There's nothing as horrible as having the neighboring empires sweep into your tiny little nation. And so, decimate all of your young people carry the remainder off to their foreign capital and embark on a project of cultural genocide that is just subjugating you and making you in this case into Babylonians.

And they burn your city and they burn your temple and they take away all the beautiful things that were devoted to God, the God as you understood him. And you end up on by the waters of Babylon, Psalm 137 says, by the waters of Babylon we, we sat down and wept when we remembered Zion, we remembered Jerusalem. And that's as dire as the scenarios could be of what might happen in the wake of all this, it's hard to imagine anything more dire than that kind of cultural eradication.

And the Psalmist of Psalm 137 says, how can we sing the song of the Lord in this foreign land? And the implied answer is there is no way. The Psalmist also goes on with these really, really fierce, terrifying words of imprecation against the Babylonians wishing for the deaths of their children. It's quite horrible.

And at that moment, it feels like what could come of this, but the amazing witness of the Hebrew Bible and then picked up in the Christian scriptures and the Christian reception of the Hebrew Bible is the belief that actually God was there. That there is a way to sing the Lord's song in a foreign land, that in fact the way that Israel learned to sing in that situation of exile strengthened it in a way that never would have happened without it caused a national reckoning with sin and led to a partial restoration to the land. But then for Christians, this story gets picked up in the arrival of Jesus.

And then Jesus recuplish the whole thing, and he weeps over Jerusalem as he foresees its destruction again by Roman armies. And then he himself is crucified by Roman, by the Roman occupiers, and it seems like his movement is going to be eradicated. And we believe that's not the end of the story.

So, whatever your worst case scenario is, the witness of the Bible is God is mysteriously powerfully gracefully present and actually can unlock possibility for the world, even in the very, very worst things that have ever happened to people. And just one more thing to say, Andrew Israel was not the only nation that the Babylonians assimilated. But it's the only one that survived.

It's the only one we still know the name of. And in fact we have no remnants of the great Empire of Babylon in the traces of history in any particularly notable way. But the people

who went through that crucible of exile because in fact God was their God are with us today are bearing witness to that God today.

And as Christians we believe all of us now get invited into that story. So that exile becomes all of our story. That to me is the deep hope in this in the contingencies of this moment which may turn out for better or for worse, who knows.

But there's nothing so bad that it can't be taken up into the story of exile and into the story of the cross. My favorite parts about the Babylonian exile is the Jews were told to contribute to the health of the city. Yes, not to withdraw, but to contribute to the mainstream culture in that moment.

They created the idea of a minority group and create a minority group. Yes, never try to become the majority group. Yes.

That's a genius twist of a really civilizational shift. Incredible, incredible. I did I'd love to ask a little for you to just maybe unpack that a little more what I mean what what are some of the pieces of becoming a creative minority.

What what might that look like. And then you're going to build in your people were your people, and you live with your people. And the idea that you could live in another civilization while still remaining a separate people was a novelty.

And so they were told you know you're going to keep these separate people but you're not going to isolate yourself you're going to serve with the other people you're going to vote for them you're going to make the city healthy. And so I think that's a piece I think that was in first things called on creative minorities. And frankly coming from a Jewish home I now watch Christians turning into minorities in their own country and I'm like, you know, Christians are complaining Oh, you know we're down to 39% of the population like we're to what are you complaining about.

But I do think Christians are now learning to become a creative minority in a culture that is there not, they're not really the majority culture anymore and I that can be a very promising thing. The final thing I to say just what religions given my wife had a she had its comment magazine versus a co sponsor of this event. And she had editorial just making the good point that in all religious traditions suffering is redemptive.

Not necessarily a belief that comes into the secular world. Yes. But and the ways it is redemptive to me it's redemptive in the way it takes some suffering to destroy the ego like we all know what the person we want to be.

But in those moments of suffering. I have a book you can either be broken or you can be broken open. And the people who are broken, you know, shrivel up and make themselves in vulnerable.

And the people are broken open say no I'm going to become a bigger wider person one of my favorite theological passages from Paul Tillek series of sermons in the 1950s. And he says what suffering does is it interrupts your life and reminds you you're not the person you thought you were. And then he says what it does is carve through the floor of the basement of your soul and reveals a cavity below and the car for that floor and reveals another cavity below so you see deeper into yourself than you ever saw before in those moments of suffering.

And you realize that on a spiritual and relational food will fill those things, which we bring back to the point that I forgot two questions ago, which was one of the nice things about this moment especially for college students but for all of us really is that a lot of us think we are our plans. That we have these plans for our life which is our career, etc, etc. And that we are chasing our plan.

And in moments like this when your plans are upended, you realize you're you're better than your plan. And that there's a quieter self beneath the plans. And so that's a good thing to be reminded of.

And then the other thing people these moments remind us of is overinvest in friendships. That's what you need at these moments I had a friend I don't know if it was in the class we had together at Yale but I had one of my students said, you know my life is about putting out fires. If I have a test that's a fire if I'm taking the LSAT that's a fire maybe it was you who said this I can't remember who said it.

I could have been it sounds like my life. And he said you know my my girlfriend is sometimes a fire. But my friends are never fires.

And so I under invest in them. And so this is a reminder that you're going to need them in circumstances like this. I love I'm curious Lydia what you kind of contributed to this I think you've just done a lot of work on mortality and death and art of dying and obviously that's kind of all the realm of suffering.

And yeah what would you kind of add to how this is reframing possibly the way that we think about suffering. Yeah I mean it's what I've been thinking about it's just the role of community and investing in community and that can be a community within a community it can be. So David's example from Babylon the Jews in Babylon.

It can be in New York City it's often in buildings. It's we find that one of the easiest ways to develop community is opening the door and seeing this across the hall. Certainly with with students with people that you're teaching employees, people in the workplace there's a way in which that is becoming a community.

And with higher stakes. Somehow the the the coronavirus pandemic is kind of, I think making all of us attend to these zoom meetings in different ways right. There's a there's

a sense you don't you don't know if somebody's not going to be on the call tomorrow because they'll have gotten sick.

I've been on calls and then found out that the reason why people weren't there is because they've gotten sick. So attending to that community and then within the context of that community working out answers to some of these questions, you know what matters, what matters, why am I here. What is this for? Where am I going to where am I going to put my energy? What do I believe? What happens when I die all but those are those are questions that really need to be we need to wrestle with in the community and.

And as I wrote, I think what in that first things piece that this work has been done so it's not, it's not like we need to sort of come up with new ideas. But we need to sort of attend to what what has been done and sort of work through this stuff together. One of the student questions is coming in on this and maybe David I just directed to you given your, you know, teaching and then we had a class together too but.

One students asking, will this pandemic change the way that students look at education. What do you think. I hope so.

You know, I think not so much students but their parents have caused have made going to school more of profession than it needs to be. And just once in my life I'd like to have a student come up to me and say, you know, I really want to major in accounting but my parents are forcing me to major in art history. I'm not for somebody since the parents who forced to.

But I do think, you know, I went to the University of Chicago and it did so much for me, none of which was about my career what I thought I was going to do with my life. It entered me into a long line of scholarship. This centuries long conversation of which I was just a peon.

It helped me see clearly, I think. I'm in politics now a lot of the time and people don't see clearly. They see what they want to see.

It gave me new things to love. And once you've hung around, you know, reading great books. It's hard to settle for the crack.

It's like you drunk in the best wine. Don't get the cool it. And so all these things were sort of spiritually and morally enriching.

And if you're not getting that out of the university, you're really not there for the right reason. And I meet so many students who don't have that in a Yale. There's now of course in positive psychology that has like 20, 25% of the student body.

And I'm not the biggest fan of that positive psychology. I think it's a little thin. But the

fact that 20, 25% of the student body is taking it is signed with the great spiritual hunger.

And when I look at college students today, I find them utterly unlike the students I had seven years ago. Who were much more data oriented and much more into pragmatics and very hostile to certainty and ideology. And now I find students much more morally passionate in good ways and bad.

And also what the generation going into this, if I can generalize and I know young people love it when people my age generalize about the young. I think it's like their favorite thing. I just, I see a group of people who it's more emotionally open than any generation I'm familiar with and is struggling through a lot of emotional stuff.

But doing it in sort of a heroic way. And so my anticipation is that this will hit people at that emotional level at an emotionally alive level in the way of my not have for my generation. So, so here the direct follow on David and then I'd love to just quickly and the Lydia your response as well.

We have a student Joseph who's asking, what is the appropriate emotional response to this uncertain future. Should we grieve hope remain optimistic. Yeah, well I'm chosen to remain optimistic because I'm full.

But, you know, I would say resilience and resilience is important to say that resilience is not having good thoughts. And it's not saying, Oh, I'm going to become resilience is about confronting the stress head on and discovering the coping coping mechanisms you have against it. And so I think there's a little you want to turn what seems to be a threat, which arouses like cortisol and all these destructive things you want to turn that into a from a challenge.

And so that attitude, this is the challenge that's going to be part of a narrative where I'm going to be a much better person and we're going to be a much better society. And suffering only hurts you if you can't attach it to a narrative of redemption. And if you can take your moment of suffering and attach it to a narrative of redemption, then that's when those are the moments when suffering helps you.

Lydia, I'd love you to weigh in on this. I mean, you're kind of ground zero in some ways in the US here here in New York. When we were joking about this actually before this call officially started sort of what's the right tone and, you know, for for engaging this topic.

Yeah, what would you say to to Joseph's question about, you know, grieve hope remain optimistic. Yeah, actually I would say grief and hope. So the way that I tend to think about this is there, you know, the sort of kind of, if you way of saying it is plan for the worst expect the best hope for the best kind of thing but I actually really like love the imagery of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane the night before he died.

And he is there just in total agony and English aware of his upcoming death. And he says he's crisis praying to the father to God the father, and he says take this cup from me. And I think there's a way in which in difficult situations we can grieve we can weep about them.

We can certainly warm the loss the loss to ourselves the loss of people we love. We can ask for it all to go away. But then Christ couples that with, but not my will but that can be done.

And I think that's really beautiful because I mean so for the non religious person this might be sound like a surrender to fate. For the Christian this is really a way of saying like, look, it's not my life, right, it's not my life. At the end of the day, if, if I believe I am sort of a child of God or if I believe I am created or whatever the language you might choose to use.

At the end of the day it's not my life and so I can ask for all of this to be taken away. But at the end of the day Christ says not my will but then we done. There's a French Eastern Orthodox theologian whose name I'm glinking on right now.

And he says that in times of great suffering, we should not pray and make this go away. But we should ask that that which is spiritually most useful would transpire. And I kind of I mean as a doctor who takes care of sickness and suffering right yes I want it to go away.

But at the end of the day as a person of faith I think that asking that that which is spiritually most useful transpire might be the more honest. The more honest request. I have a quick quick done into that which would just be I think a way of holding together grief and hope is something that when we read, especially the Psalms, we call lament.

And lament in our language is often become just meaning kind of be wailing something but the the Psalms of lament. And that's actually hold together grief and hope almost all the time there's one exception. There's one Psalms on 88 that really just ends in despair because that is part of the experience of human beings at times.

But almost all the other songs of lament and it's about a third to depending on how you count maybe a third to a half of all the Psalms are in this genre. And they they enfold grief in a relationship with a God who is believed to be there. Why bother lamenting if there's no one to hear you.

And and couple grief with that surrender that you talked about Lydia and that openness to what God is doing. And Jesus quotes one when he himself is on the cross on 22 my God my God why have you forsaken me. And like he says as he's being crucified it's the first line of the Psalm and in in the in his time the the Psalms weren't numbered you didn't say Psalm 22 you referred to it by its first line.

So that's like the name of the song but but I would just urge anyone to read Psalm 22, which begins with this experience of total dereliction other exposure and even being laid in the dust of death. And it just doesn't stop there and it's just amazing that we can hold these things together. So faith especially the faith that comes to us out of the Hebrew Bible and through the mouth and life of Jesus gives us a way to do these two things together rather than choose one or the other.

Could you also speak a little bit about I mean I've read you on this and and you know I think you've written on recently Andy. And then you've written on the screen lamenting and then creativity. And so as we start thinking also about thinking about you know David's point also about the exile and sort of this this grieving process of being being exiled and then and yet in then through that this creative minority was born in this and share some of your thinking on that I think it's really helpful.

Well this is a very mysterious thing but I actually think that lament is the seed of creativity. It's the seed of genuine creative action. It's when you you sense that something is wrong in the world and you fully bring it into expression and you hold it before God if you if you are able to hold it before God even just try it out even if you're not sure he's there just try it.

Somehow it unlocks the ability to actually act creatively in the world and I got this from a colleague of mine. I work with entrepreneurs through this organization called Praxis and one of our venture partners is a woman Donna Harris and she taught this room of super high powered entrepreneurs serial entrepreneurs people have built companies and nonprofits she actually taught us how to write our own lament and this was months ago long before this particular crisis was upon us and she said when you cry out when you complain when you reaffirm your trust in God when you promise to obey God no matter what happens all those things that happen for Jesus in the garden. It unlocks creative power and I'm writing a book right now and I have a lament that I wrote that I read every day before I start writing and I've actually found that anchoring my creative work in my grief about the world my anger at the injustice of the world my trust in God in spite of all that unlocks possibility and I think we're going to see tremendous acts of genuine creativity happen but they don't happen if you try to repress it or pretend it's not there they actually are birthed out of the pain of the groaning of the world with my books the readers are doing the lamenting also the possibility So I've got a question question for Lydia that just came in this is very practical so kind of moving a little bit from the abstract to the practical.

Are there any hands on ways that college students can serve at this time? What would actually be helpful? Yeah, well actually, I don't know, well I'll get I'll stab at this and then pass it to David David you might have more contact with college students I work with med students so I think there's been a lot of stuff in the news about the Gen Zers and the Millennials kind of getting a bad rap for spreading disease and partying and spring

break and Florida and all that stuff. But I think it's actually a really unique opportunity for the sort of college age kids and grad students to serve. The reason for this is because a lot of our elders are really really scared. So just quick quick note on mortality right 8% of folks in their 70s 15% of folks in their 80s and 20% of folks in their 90s who get coronavirus are dying.

Those are decent numbers and then when you, you know, couple that with possibility of a shortage of hospital beds etc etc right which were again we're not there. Thankfully, people are nervous. And so, you know, the flip side of this is that yes while on occasion you have the Millennial who does get coronavirus and is hospitalized.

For the most part, young people are coming out relatively unscathed. And this means that you have a very, very unique opportunity to serve. So, you know, again, who is your community.

Who is your network. Who are your neighbors. Identify them and figure out what you can do to serve them because guaranteed there will be plenty of folks in your in your surroundings.

Who would love to have someone just go pick up their groceries for them or walk their dog for them or you need it so so there are a lot of needs I think there are ways like that just get involved. David, you want to take a stab at that. Yeah, the first thing I want to say, one of the things that should go mentioned is that in, I said mentioned I was doing England under the Blitz, and they had the RAF pilots who symbolized the country for them and gave them a sense of we are a heroic people.

Now I'm very interested to see, you know, it's interesting the healthcare workers are now those heroes for us. And so I think that's going to reorient how we think about what an admirable life looks like. The other thing I happen to like and Lydia can correct me but every time I go into any healthcare facility, I find it's one of the most ethnically diverse places I go.

Not too much global with it. So that's like the vision of the future of America when you go into healthcare facility. And so I think that's going to have a positive effect as for what college students can do.

I would start first with home. I think it's going to be tough. A lot of 21, 20 year olds are going to be stuck at home with mom and dad.

And that's going to have its moments of challenge. And I do think it's a time to have as one psychologist told me that feelings conversation. And just as where you actually talk about your feelings about what you're going through.

And Andy is a great one for ritual. And he always has the rituals that I admire one of the ones I'll repeat that I say all the time with friends is that he goes outside to look at the

sky before turning on the screen every morning, which is a great little ritual. But I think building ritual into meal time at this time is super important.

What are you grateful for? What are you worried about? What are you doing to give to use? And then I would just outside the immediate home, FaceTime is really going to be important. Just FaceTiming people you know people you don't know people you vaguely know. And then those acts of care to the extent they're possible.

Those things will turn what could be a terrifying time into a time of meaning. And I'm one of the things I'm many things I'm walking away from this conversation is how important it is going to be to make meaning out of this. So it doesn't seem like just this random biological event that doesn't have a human and a moral content.

And so doing acts that will give yourself a sense of meaning out of this would seem to be important for all of us. Andy, would you have anything to add on the kind of practical sort of what what can students be doing? I know you've, you have a couple college students or at least one, I think who's probably back at home with you now. But yeah, just curious what you would say to college students.

I don't have too much to add to these really good ideas rally the people you know and trust to live faithfully. And I don't just mean that in a religious way I mean live faithfully your commitments I think your concentric circles of commitments you're the people you're sharing your home with right now, the people you're sharing your neighborhood right now but then also your friends from school like rally them to the people who live lives in the midst of this. The we just got a few more minutes left and I've noticed that a number of our questions have, you know in some way should reform have to do with kind of what should we be, I mean even in the middle of crisis like this what should we be building, or what should we be beginning to build.

And so this does seem like an even historically a lot of great things have been invented and created in times of disorganization and chaos and it kind of like we talked about it creates this can create a moment of creativity. Where would you be pointing students in terms of directing their creative energy as they begin to think about what what does it look like to build even now not just to get through this sort of in in this. What does it look like to build what should we be building.

So there's a high probability that we're going to see a wipe out of institutions. And I mean then small businesses or in the world I know best for we've as the nonprofit sector, and 30% of nonprofits have carried in the best of times a month's worth of cash on hand. And after that they're done.

And so we're looking at just a lot of organizations just perishing. And then we're going to be building institutional structures that you can then activate when the world goes back to normal whether it's a small business, or whether it's a nonprofit and getting together

virtually and saying okay I'm going to think entrepreneur at this moment. And because there's going to be a lot of voids out there.

That would be a useful way to spend the time at home. And it is worth remembering and I've gotten the exact statistics, but some insanely high percentage of successful companies in the last half of the 20th century were founded in 1932 and 33 at the depth of depression. And so these are weirdly creative moments.

Lydia I'd love to go to you kind of thinking within the healthcare system we've also had a few other questions that are directly related to this. How do we need to be thinking about kind of building within the context of healthcare. Can you be more specific.

Well, I can add more specificity. Tell me which way you want me to go here. I think which way do I want you to go.

Why don't we do the, I think, just as we think about healthcare sort of what it is, how it's delivered. So, you mean the \$3.5 trillion question. And we only have a minute really.

So I'll just wrap that up for you. Yet no, these are big questions. And I think if this crisis does anything, I hope, I hope it's a wake up call to sort of the state of healthcare in this country.

I mean, we don't have to get political on this necessarily because I'm sure our views are very divergent. But there are people who are working with, while they are sick with coronavirus because they don't have paid sick leave, right. There are people who have not gone in for any sort of care because they're afraid of co-pays.

All the stuff is real and you guys have read about this in the news. I don't have quick, easy answers for this. We have created a system that values sort of individual entrepreneurial component to this, right.

And that's the system that we've had in this country combined with a federal sort of single-payer component that is both the VA hospital system and the federal government. So it's a complicated, complicated system. There's a lot at stake.

It definitely needs to improve. And I hope this is a bit of a wake up call, but, you know, anyone who's followed politics over the last 20 years knows that it's not going to be easy to improve these things. Can I just say a quick thing on this, not on healthcare though.

Sure. I, you know, I think because we have Andy and he is so good with innovation and David with his work with nonprofits and thinking creatively. I also think this is a time when, so again, harkening back to lament when people who are creative types can actually make art and not see that as a way.

But actually to see that as this being a gift. And there's a way in which this current crisis

can inspire wonderful works, literary works, poetry, painting, other creative outlets that I'm not thinking of, but to sort of transform the lament into creative productivity and not to see that as, as somehow like fluttering the time away, right, but actually to be intentional about that. So that was what I've seen.

So good. Andy, why don't yeah, I would love for you to add. I'm sorry I lost the thread of the question.

Yeah, it's for the, for the students among us who are really looking to build and during this time of chaos while they're sitting at home. Kind of where would you direct their thinking or their energy or their aspiration? How would you. Right.

Thank you for the refresher. Yes. Now is the time in every domain include.

I'm so glad you mentioned our lady like this is not just about being practical. This is about ministering in a sense to the whole of what human beings are and each of us has a different role to play in that. Now is the time to find a few friends and build a prototype that is try something out.

Try out something that can be done under these conditions. These very, very stringent challenging conditions, something that only requires, say, 10 people to get together in a room to really matter. Because if you can build something today that can flourish under these conditions, that it very possibly can flourish under more hospitable conditions in a few years when the worst of this crisis has passed.

And this is a great time not to think you come up. It's not a great time for master planning because none of us know anything. It's an amazing time for experimenting.

And one of the things I've really learned from just being around entrepreneurs and working with people who think like designers is the value just of the small initial attempt. And you learn from it. You try again.

You don't pretend you've got a perfect plan. You don't. It's not a grand strategy session.

But it is trying something and it always is done with more than one person. There's hardly anyone ever who's created social good by themselves. It's always two or three, maybe four or five, not much more than that.

Find those friends. Think about what what can we try. What an amazing chance to do that.

If you like this and you want to hear more, like, share, review, and subscribe to this podcast. And from all of us here at the Veritas Forum, thank you.

(buzzing)