

The 6 D's of a Covid Christmas (Dr. Bob Krahn)

I realize that it might be more fitting to write about the 4 Sundays in Advent with Hope, Peace, Love and Joy. Or the 3 wise men who visited Jesus in the manger (which we know wasn't actually 3 people but rather wise men who brought 3 gifts). Or perhaps the great company of the heavenly host (this number is still being debated but it's actually a lot). Or in a more secular and jovial way I could have written about the 12 days of Christmas or Santa's 8 reindeer plus Rudolph. And of course there's the 7 dwarfs who went to the restaurant for lunch but with Covid only 6 could sit at the table so one wasn't Happy.

So where did I come up with my 6 D's of a Covid Christmas? I have been concerned about the health of our churches since the disruptions and closures began over 9 months ago. I have also been monitoring my own mental health over this time period and have talked to many of the leaders in our churches to see how they are doing. As I reflected on my findings, I noticed a collective progression in how we are dealing with the new world in which we're now living. Not everyone reflects my interpretation of what is happening, but it has been helpful for me to put into words some of my thoughts.

1. Delighted: When the pandemic hit us, I had several meetings on my calendar lined up to work with churches dealing with conflict. In one week that all went to Zero. The mood changed from 'how can I get my way' to 'how can we work together to get through this'. Even though there were lots of changes, the talk among leaders was

about how God is in control and how the true missional church will still be the church as they find new ways to be on mission in their communities.

2. Disappointed: After a couple months of not meeting together, there was a sadness about the lack of support and connectedness that used to be there in public gatherings and especially in the smaller meetings.
3. Disillusioned: As rules changed for church gatherings and special events and as Covid numbers climbed and people died, there was a growing despondency over how this would all work out. In fact some churches found themselves talking more about whether they should wear a mask than about Jesus.
4. Depressed: Statistics are now out about the numbers of pastors and leaders who are considering resigning. One common comment I hear is: "I'm working harder than ever before and seeing fewer results". Financial giving to churches is down and recent surveys say that many churches will have approximately 30% less attenders if/when this is all over. The balance is that church expenses are also lower, and the 'virtual' church is up as far as attendance.
5. Dead: Along with many businesses, some churches will die. Some will never recover. Marriages are stressed and may not make it. You can look at our world in chaos and find many examples of the 5 D's above.

SO – as I check myself out on the first 5D emotional health scale I ask where am I today?

AND – the bigger question is What am I going to do about it?

6. DEPENDENT: That's the big answer! I depend on JESUS to walk with me through each step of my emotional health. I don't deny my feelings, but I don't want them to dictate my life and future. I want to be a victor, not a victim of my circumstances. And I can't do this on my own. How do I do this?

When I was young and crazy (OK, more crazy than now) I used to do a lot of street racing. I had an 8 cylinder, 4 door hard top, Dodge Polara with a push button transmission. Two of us were lined up at a red light revving our engines. The light turned green and the other guy dropped the clutch and took off. Since I had an automatic tranny, I had to put it into gear to take off. I was watching the light and when it turned green I accidentally pushed the R (Reverse) button and took off burning rubber backwards. Philippians. 4: 8-9 is underlined, highlighted and has an asterisk in my Bible. It lists all the things we are to focus on – what is true ... excellent or praiseworthy... think on these things. You can't go forward if you are going backward.

As we enter into the uncharted waters of a Covid Christmas we have a choice to focus on our circumstances, or to focus on Christ who brings Hope, Peace, Love and Joy into the world and into our lives. When John the Baptist was in prison, I think that he was Depressed and would soon be Dead. How did he deal with his circumstances? He was encouraged to look to Jesus and Depend on Him for his salvation, hope, peace, love and joy. Here's your Christmas exercise – What D best describes you? What are you going to do about it?

As for me ... our family is going to have a Merry Christmas even though our new song is "I'll be Home for Christmas (alone)."