

*Thoughts from Pastor Rodney
March 25, 2020*

Different

As I sit in my home office and think of what is happening in the world, I am reminded again of the disruptions we are facing because of COVID-19. The TV updates me of quarantines that are in place, the places that we should and should not go, and the ever-increasing search for toilet paper. (What's that about anyway?) I even saw a commercial from a fast food restaurant assuring me that everything was going to be okay because I can still have it my way.

I realize that a whopping burger is not going to make everything okay, especially when my drive-thru ministry is headquartered elsewhere. But I also realize that this is just one attempt to keep some sense of normalcy in a changing culture. What we are going through now will affect how we do certain things in the future. We are coming up with different ways to conduct business transactions, educate our youth, visit with our families, even have church.

Please don't misunderstand. I am still the same person that doesn't like change. (I just get tired of doing the same thing over and over again.) I know that "different" doesn't always mean "better". It does, however, mean opportunity. Whether it is opportunity for success or failure, "different" forces us to look at situations with new perspective. "Different" stretches us to reach out in ways that may feel unnatural to us. As in any stretching exercise, sometimes we gain strength and renewed vitality; sometimes we pull something and feel pain.

When I go to the gym, I think of all the different exercises made available to me. I enjoy some, like the shoulder press, leg press, arm curls, and elliptical. I endure some, like the treadmill. And I absolutely despise some, like the stair stepper and abdominal chair. The thing is, some people love the treadmill, and they smile, and even run, on the stair stepper. They enjoy and respond to different things than I do.

The important thing to remember about "different" is that it should apply to our methods and not our goals. "Different" at the gym is finding the best available methods to strengthen our bodies and live healthy lives.

“Different” at church is finding the best available methods to strengthen our spirit and live a life of worship. Our spiritual goals should never change. We should be about glorifying the name of Almighty God with our actions and words; we should be about reaching others (in person or by technology) and sharing the Good News of Jesus, so they might confess Jesus Christ as Lord. Then we should be about teaching them the word of God (in person or by technology). We will baptize them as soon as we can. (Wouldn't it be great to have a huge baptism service when we all get back together?)

As a church, we are beginning some new exercises in “different”. These “Pastor’s Thoughts” are different than what we are used to. We are hoping to have our first video sermon this weekend. We are planning ways to share prayer requests and small group times together. We are working to strengthen the body of Blackman’s Grove Baptist Church. Our methods may be a little different, but our goal is to continue to love the Lord, our God with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our mind...and to love our neighbor as ourselves.

I am grateful that many of you are calling each other. Many are looking out for the needs of neighbors. Many are meeting in small groups of two or three. Many are having conversations with neighbors who are frightened by this virus or are unsure of their future. During these times, God is giving us an opportunity to be “different”. Let us use these calls and meetings as a chance to exercise our faith. End a phone call or a meeting with prayer. I have found that just saying, “Hey, can we pray about this real quick?” usually works. Ask God to make His glory known through these trying times. Give others the assurance that God is in control of this world and He wants us to give Him control of our lives. When we exercise our faith in different ways, we may be surprised at how we grow.

As always, please let me know if you need anything. Continue to be the church that God has called us to be. Pray for healing, protection and peace during this time. May God Bless You All!

Pastor Rodney