

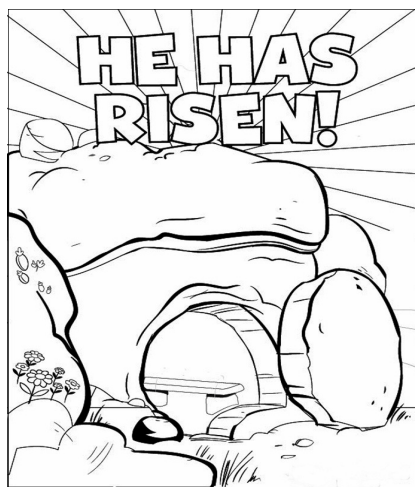
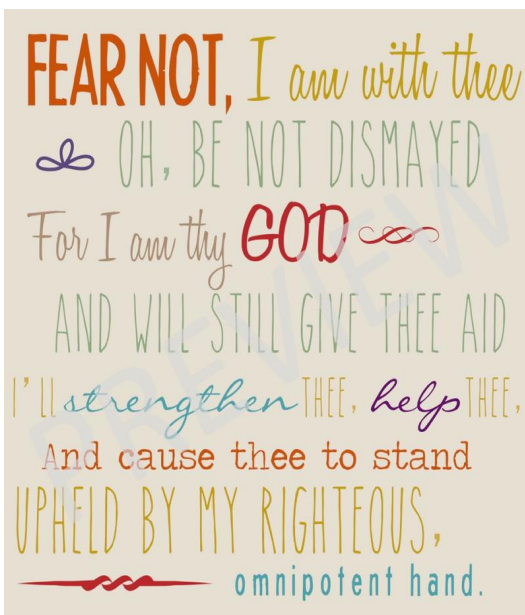


# The Central FOCUS

April 2020

## These Are The Times

*By Pastor Alfonso Hodges, Shiloh Missionary Bapt. Church*



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These are the times in which the corona virus has changed life as we know it as the body of Christ. Our church services are no longer being held in some of our buildings, because of the statewide, "shelter in place" order by Gov. J.B. Pritzker for individuals in Illinois, to combat the effects of the corona virus.

The C.D.C, (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) reported as of Monday, March 23, 2020, there has been an increase of 33,453 new cases of the corona virus and 400 deaths in the U. S., compared to March 20, 2020, where there were 18,185 corona virus cases and 199 deaths.

In our neighborhood grocery stores, people are taking more than what they need without any regard for others, especially seniors. Empty shelves at the grocery stores, where bread, eggs, toilet paper, food, and water, use to be, were being sought after as if it were a famine in the land. The virus in Italy is killing hundreds of people at such an alarming rate that the health care system is about to collapse, and the funeral homes cannot keep up. Meanwhile, here in the U.S., over a dozen states (15 at the time of this writing) have taken extreme preventative measures to safeguard some and isolate others who may be infected.

While the threat of the virus has confined many of God's people to their homes and may change how we worship on Good Friday, Palm and Easter Sunday, it has increased my use of the internet to spread the gospel. I am using Facebook to do God's work, although I should have been doing it all along. But, if it had not been for the virus disrupting, dividing, and dispersing the members at my church, then the gospel would have been still within the four walls of the building.

While these may be the times that try men's souls, these are also the times that man's heart, mind, and soul, should be in God's possession. These are the times that our faith and our trust must be anchored in the solid rock. These are the times in which the men and women of God, should earnestly be calling upon the name of the Lord for his family, friends, and even his foes. These are the times, where our mouths should cry out for heaven's mercy and heaven's grace. These are the times where we should trust in the Lord with all our heart (Prov. 3:5). These are the times where we all should pray without ceasing (Thess. 5:17). These are the times where we should be like the psalmist and say, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills from whence cometh my help. My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth" (Ps. 121:1,2). These are the times that "if my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and heal their land" (2 Chr. 7:14). Yes, these are the times!

# How An Online Bible Study Changed How I Think About Community

By Meredith Flynn, IBSA

Six of us meet for an hour every week, late enough that the kids are in bed and I've even had time to brew a cup of (decaf) tea. My husband Chris and I settle in and log into a virtual meeting. We spend the next hour talking to four of our friends about the spiritual discipline or practice we've studied that week.

We've covered Bible-reading, the practice of Sabbath, and Scripture memorization, among others. Our next training module is on evangelism. In more than 30 years as a Christian, the concept of discipleship has never seemed as attainable as it has in this season of walking with others along the same road—from the comfort of my own couch.

When I think about what has made my virtual community so effective, I think it boils down to three things:

**1. Our meetings are consistent and mostly distraction-free.**

The coaches who lead our group (my pastor and one of our elders) have worked hard to keep our meetings to an hour. We start with a brief time of prayer requests and reasons to celebrate from the previous week. Since our time together is relatively short, we maximize the hour by sticking close to our material for the week.

**2. Our study material is focused on personal discipleship.**

The curriculum we use, developed by the North American Mission Board, includes articles and book chapters to read, videos to watch, and a few written assignments to complete every week. The homework, which amounts to around three hours a week, points me as an individual believer to deeper devotion to Christ and stronger commitment to spiritual discipline.

**3. Our time is formatted like a coaching session.** We submit our assignments online before our weekly meeting, and our coaches review them and ask discussion questions about what we've written. It's discipleship in real time. It has compelled me not only to get my homework done, but also to learn from how my fellow group members are interacting with the material.

These principles are transferrable to in-person gatherings too, but they may be especially helpful for people who are new to the concept of community. Or, for those of us who are busy and easily distracted, but still can benefit from the accountability of weekly assignments and a consistent meeting time. My virtual community has invited me into warmer fellowship with fellow believers because I know there are people personally invested in my spiritual development, as I am in theirs.

**NOTE:** In light of the Corona virus causing a disruption in church as usual, this might give you other options to help your church body to meet. Launch a daily podcast to connect with their church; Start YouTube channels; Get active on Instagram; Take email way more seriously; Do live prayer services on Zoom; Leverage Facebook Live, Watch Parties and Groups; And I'm sure there's 1000 more examples out there.

CBA Sponsored Sr. Adult event

## Cinco De Mayo Celebration

**10:00 AM-Tuesday, May 5th**  
**Calvary Baptist Church**  
**1833 S. Country Club Rd., Decatur**

**Beef & chicken Nacho/Taco Bar**  
**\$5 per person**



**Men-Wear your**  
**sombreros and**  
**Panchos!**  
**Ladies- frilly**  
**дресses or skirts!!**

**Pinata fun!**

RSVP by April 29th at your church or go to the web page at [http://cbadecatur.com/senior\\_adult\\_cinco\\_de\\_mayo\\_celebration\\_meal](http://cbadecatur.com/senior_adult_cinco_de_mayo_celebration_meal)



**Six exciting weeks to fit your busy summer schedule!**

Lake Sallateeska Baptist Camp  
& Streator Baptist Camp

## Register today for an IBSA Summer Camp!

This year's theme is, "Level Up," based on Philippians 3:13-14, "Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus."

Level Up Summer Camp, Week 1-June 8-12 @ Streator Baptist Camp (David Van Bebber, Director) Chad Williams, Camp Pastor

Go to <https://www.ibsa.org/ministry-resources/kids/summer-camps/> Download the Week 1 Camp Information Sheet, Download the Packing List, Register for Week 1, Medical Form (Required), Apply to be an Adult Volunteer, Adult volunteers must also register here

You can take a kid out of camp, but you can't take camp out of a kid," said the leader from First Baptist Church in Atwood. "I have kids who live for this week."



## BCHFS Board Approves Plans for Pregnancy Resource Clinic

A new pregnancy resource clinic will be located in Mt. Vernon, IL and will be a source of information and help to those who find themselves dealing with an unexpected pregnancy. The clinic will offer pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, STD testing, mentoring for expecting mothers and fathers and resources to empower individuals during this complicated time.

The clinic will go beyond the physical well-being of every mother, father and child that comes through our doors. In addition to the care our guests receive, they will also have mentoring made available to them by volunteers who are trained specifically in this area. Regardless of the choices a woman makes or will make, they will be shown love and understanding. All services provided will be free and confidential. Even though unplanned pregnancies have their challenges, our goal is for every person who comes in to feel informed and encouraged.

The pregnancy resource clinic will be open 5 days a week holding regular hours but will also host a 24 hour helpline. The clinic has plans to open in 2020. Please pray for this new opportunity for the BCH&FS to reach out with God's love.



# Uniquely Ours

What women bring to life



**Chrystie Cole**  
Biblical  
Femininity



**Elizabeth Encinia**  
Living  
Missionally



**Kasey Ewing**  
Trusting  
God



**Jeff Iorg**  
When to  
Lean In



**Kimberly Sowell**  
From Committed  
to Surrendered

**priority**  
Annual Women's Conference

April 24-25 • Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield

To register go to [IBSA.org/Priority](http://IBSA.org/Priority)

## Churches:

**Argenta**  
**Arthur**  
**Atwood**  
**Calvary**  
**Emmanuel**  
**Fellowship**  
**Findlay**  
**Forsyth**  
**Galilee**  
**Hammond**  
**Heyworth**  
**Lincoln**  
**Lovington**  
**Mt. Zion**  
**Shiloh**  
**Sullivan**  
**Summit Avenue**  
**Tabernacle**  
**Tri-Valley**

### Mission Statement

*Central Baptist Association exists to foster relationships among churches in order to assist them in fulfilling the Great Commission.*

***CBA Vision is to see churches collaborating together to build the Kingdom of God.***

### CBA churches without Pastors:

Argenta  
Calvary  
Fellowship

### Forsyth has a new pastor:

Bruce Homontowski

Summit Avenue's Pastor Darren Morrow is struggling with multiple health issues. Please lift him in prayer.

Please pray for our churches, especially for these without pastors and for Forsyth's new pastor.



## FREE Lunch for CBA Church Secretaries

On April 21st at 11:30 AM  
at Red Lobster, Forsyth

RSVP to Chris at 217-521-2420 before April 20th.

## Coming Events

### April (All events are tentative)

5th-Palm Sunday

**12th-Easter Sunday**

15th-Tax Day

16-18th-Central Disaster Relief Training at Emmanuel in Carlinville, IL

22nd-Administrative Professionals Day

24th-25th-Women's Priority Conference at Crowne Plaza Hotel, Springfield

### May

5th-10:30 AM-Sr. Adult Event Cinco De Mayo at Calvary Baptist Church

7th at 6 PM-Backyard Bible Club Training

9th at 8 AM-Pastor's Breakfast at Diamonds Restaurant, Decatur

**10th-Mother's Day**

17th-23rd-Association Missions Emphasis week

25th-Memorial Day

## Central Baptist Association

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