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Why Quarantine Works

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- [17-04-2020](#)

Ever see the word “quarantine” in a headline before this year? Suddenly, it is the world’s biggest story, and could be for some time. As health authorities desperately work to limit the spread of covid -19, their most urgent measure has been to isolate anyone who has been exposed to it. That means keeping people home to avoid other people.

Where did the idea of quarantine come from? It hasn’t been broadly practiced until very modern times. In fact, this is why so many plagues throughout the centuries and across the world have been so devastating. For example, when bubonic plague swept Europe from 1348 to 1359, *one third* of Europe’s population was killed! Yet a certain group was largely unaffected: the Jews. Why? Mostly because they quarantined the sick. The word *quarantine* actually comes from this period, from the Italian *quaranta giorni* (40 days) isolation of incoming ship passengers and crew. Jews were prominent in Venice, where this practice was implemented.

Where did the Jews get it from? From the same source of other health laws that drastically reduced the Black Death’s impact on their population, including washing hands and avoiding unclean meats. It was a code that had originated nearly *three millennia earlier*—long before scientists discovered bacteria in 1676 and viruses in 1892. It included rules for good hygiene and meticulous protocols to halt the spread of contagious disease.

Thirty-five centuries ago, there was a nation practicing good hygiene and medical quarantine: Israel, led by Moses. And the Israelites had received those health laws from *God Himself*.

This timeless, detailed instruction is recorded in the Old Testament. Leviticus 11 contains laws designating some animals as clean and some as unclean. This was not just ceremonial; it was principally for physical health. Bats, for example, are unclean—and breaking that law is the origin of Ebola and most cases of fatal rabies (some say even of possible origin of COVID-19). Deuteronomy 23 commands burying human waste, which many societies throughout history and even in modern times have neglected at terrible cost to their health and well-being. Leviticus 13 instructs those with contagious diseases to stay isolated outside the camp until they are well. When the ancient Israelites followed God’s hygiene and quarantine laws, they were spared from the plagues and epidemics that devastated other nations.

Many people claim the Bible is “unscientific,” but the truth is it took science about three millennia to catch up to the Bible on this point! The scientists and doctors filling the airwaves right now advocating “social distancing” are—probably unwittingly, but unmistakably—emphasizing the reliability of the Bible as a guide in life! (It is worth noting, however, that there is no biblical instance of shutting down all of society, including unexposed healthy people, as a preventative measure. That is going beyond the biblical command.)

God’s Church has been practicing quarantine for decades. We know about incubation and contagion periods for different ailments, and a great many of us have stayed home even when we feel fine because of exposure to contagions, out of loving concern about unwittingly spreading them to other people. We were self-isolating before self-isolating was cool!

The fact that God’s commands on this point are proving so wise, so practical and effective, so ahead of their time, should cause people worldwide to look into the Holy Bible, including the Old Testament, and see that it really is the inspired Word of

God!

But quarantine is also in the New Testament. This principle is expounded *throughout* the Bible as an important principle not only of physical health but also of *spiritual* health. Old Testament and New Testament consistently show the principle by which God deals with physical evil and especially *moral* and *spiritual* evil: He commands us to *get away from it!*

Isolating those who are sick *spiritually* is even more important, because spiritual health and spiritual life is at stake. But our societies have never caught up with God on this point. As seriously as they are treating the current pandemic, they take exactly the *opposite* approach to moral and spiritual pandemics. God commands that we remove sin from our midst and avoid it—but our societies accept it, promote it, spread it. Rather than quarantining and eliminating deceit, covetousness, sexual perversion, sacrilege and other sins, we ignore them, coddle them, encourage them—we glamorize them in our entertainment. Even those who don't personally practice a particular sin fall all over themselves to show how "tolerant" they are of it. And evidence abounds that our failure to isolate spiritual sickness has caused it to thoroughly infect all of society!

Right now, nations that are applying the biblical principle of physical quarantine most seriously are having the greatest success at snuffing out this virus. If only we took the same approach to moral and spiritual contagions.

Most people aren't putting two and two together, but I challenge *you* to do so. If the Bible was so far ahead regarding the best practices for limiting the spread of infectious diseases, what else is it right about? I put to you that this is powerful proof that the Bible was indeed written by the Creator of mankind, and that it can be trusted throughout. You can look to not only its laws but also its other directives on how to live your life successfully, how to avoid curses and receive blessings, and how to obey and please God.