

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Speaking specifically about the panic-producing virus reports that fill every television news hour, Pastor Rick Warren warns all of us, “Not everything you hear is true.” And that holds true whether the information we’re receiving comes from major media news outlets or pulpits or top government sources. One way for us to determine how credible a particular warning may be is to evaluate the report within a known perspective.

As the epidemic started hitting our nation, for example, Dr. Ron Paul suggested that we weigh the daily count of coronavirus deaths against other fatality statistics. When he made these comments, 21,000 people had died from the new virus (the day I wrote this the count topped 51,000). Hence all the panic-driven enactment of life-altering regulations. Why was there no capitol-hill rush to curtail regular seasonal flu, which will kill almost six times as many people?

To drive his point home, Paul cited similar stats. Malaria and suicide will end the lives of more than ten times as many people as his COVID-19 count. Traffic fatalities will snuff out over 300,000 lives, but nobody is crying out for laws banning trucks and autos. And our culture chooses to look the other way instead of curtailing behavior that spreads HIV and AIDS, which will exterminate almost 400,000 humans this year. Compare the coronavirus data to that.

This year alcohol abuse will kill 581,000 people, Dr. Paul tells us, but our bars and liquor stores are still open. Well over a million deaths this year will be at least partially caused by smoking, and cancer will end almost twice that many lives.

To see the total, valid picture—to get a true perspective, we must recognize that our society has enacted scads of laws to try to control the dangers of alcohol and tobacco. In our country alone we spend billions annually to treat cancer and to try to eliminate it. Whatever endangers us does validly attract our legal attention and our medical dollars. But Dr. Paul’s point seems to be that if we don’t shut down life because of far more deadly threats than COVID-19, why have we let this epidemic cancel most of our regular activities.

In order to make sense of what is happening to us, Dr. Paul suggests that we need to back off and try to see the bigger picture. The new virus-rule makers may be wise and well-informed, and Dr. Paul could be comparing apples to oranges. But we need to hear him when he urges us at least to stop and think before we let fear-mongering eclipse life as we have known it.

“The wisdom that comes from above leads us to be pure, friendly, gentle, sensible, kind, helpful, genuine, and sincere,” James 3:17 tells us. We need that kind of insight right now.