



A gospel-based response to COVID-19
Resourcing and equipping the local Church

Church Training Program
Resource and Discussion Guide

MODULE 2:

Community Spiritual and
Supportive Care

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MODULE 2:

Community Spiritual and Supportive Care

View the video for Module 2 at:
<https://vimeo.com/showcase/7254895/video/437970224>

Introduction:

As this church training program seeks to see health ministries, churches and communities working together for a gospel-based response to COVID-19, this module provides guidance for churches wanting to care for the physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs of communities during this challenging time.

This Resource and Discussion Guide is intended to support the content presented in the video module by providing an overview of key concepts, as well as further questions and activities for thought and discussion.

A list of referenced materials and recommended resources is provided at the end of this guide. We strongly encourage you to access these for further information, as well as some very practical tools for responding to COVID-19 in your community.

Module 2 Outline:

- **Section 1** – Theology of risk [00:00 – 08:49]
 - **Section 2** – Caring for Church & community [08:50 – 19:58]
 - **Section 3** – The role of the Church [19:59 – 31:05]
 - **Section 4** – Promoting mental health & resilience [31:06 – 41:35]
 - **Section 5** – Home-based care for the sick [41:36 – 59:54]
 - **Section 6** – Care in times of death & grief [59:55 – 1:07:58]
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SECTION 1 – Theology of risk

KEY CONCEPTS:

- God often calls his followers to take risks, but there is always purpose in the call.
- We must not take unnecessary risks, but neither should we run when there is opportunity to be witnesses to Christ.
- Examples in history show great growth in the kingdom where Christians responded with compassion to those impacted by disaster/illness.
- God is always sovereign.
- Biblical principles on risk and suffering.
- The central question for the believer is not how safe something is, but whether it is in God's will and purpose.
- Obedience, not risk-taking, is the evidence of faith.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. "The presence or absence of suffering is not an indication of God's displeasure or favor." Do you agree?
2. Does God call us to risk, safety or both?
3. Why do you think early Christianity grew when Christians tended the sick while others ran away in fear?
4. Peter, Stephen, and Paul faithfully faced risks while serving Jesus. What risks might the Lord call His church to as we seek to share our lives and the gospel in the context of COVID-19?
5. What do these verses teach about security for Christians: Psalm 33:16-22; Matthew 10:28-31?

SECTION 2 – Caring for Church & community

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Engaging in effective, spiritual ministry while under COVID restrictions – the need for creative thinking.
- Maintaining essential activities of the church.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What challenges has your church faced due to COVID-related restrictions?
2. How can/will your church safely continue its essential ministries while still observing COVID-related restrictions?
3. How can your church better serve the community, especially the vulnerable?

SECTION 3 – The role of the Church

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Important actions that faith leaders and churches can take to protect life, reduce the spread of COVID-19 and keep the community strong and resilient –
 - Prevent churches from becoming places where the virus is spread.
 - Give accurate information and combat the spread of myths and misinformation, panic and stigma.
 - Connect with and care for your church members and members of the wider community.
 - Use your influence to promote social dialogue, unity and solidarity.
- In all speech and action, remain focused on God’s infinite love, His unwavering faithfulness, and His constant and intimate presence with His people.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How does the response of the Church to COVID-19 reflect on the reputation of Jesus and His followers?
2. If you were a COVID-19 patient, what kind of pastoral care and practical support would you appreciate?
3. Think of one or two vulnerable people in your church or community. How can you connect with them and care for them?
4. COVID-19 is happening during the formative years of children. How can you and your church be present in their lives to make this a positive time in their development?
5. How might the church address internet-spread myths, misinformation and conspiracy theories?
6. How will you lead/encourage your church to protect life and health, to reduce the spread of the virus and to keep the community strong and resilient?

SECTION 4 – Promoting mental health & resilience

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Communities and individuals are experiencing psychological distress from this ongoing, extended health crisis.
- Spiritual leaders in communities are likely to be the first, and sometimes only, source of help for distressed church and community members.
- Common signs of mental distress.
- Psychological First Aid (PFA) as a tool for supporting people who have experienced mental distress.
- Strategies for preventing and reducing mental distress.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What signs of mental distress are you observing in your church and community?
2. What steps can you and your church take to prevent mental distress and build mental health resilience in your church and community?
3. How could your church be a part of making Psychological First Aid available in your community? Could your church pioneer a training of “Psychological First Aid Responders”? Who would you train and who could facilitate the training?
4. Review the PFA action principles of LOOK, LISTEN and LINK. What does each involve?
5. What strategies can you employ to help reduce your mental distress? What can you encourage others to do?

SECTION 5 – Home-based care for the sick

IMPORTANT: Anyone providing care should be familiar with current World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines. Visit www.who.int

KEY CONCEPTS:

- In the event that established health facilities are overwhelmed by cases of COVID-19, the church can step into the gap and help provide care in the home setting.
- Guidance for home-care givers and the church in providing practical support, as well as psychosocial and spiritual support.
- Relieving most common symptoms at home (please also view Module 4).
- Protecting caregivers and family members (please also view Module 4).

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How will you and your church respond to those who are not sick enough to stay in the hospital, or if the health care system becomes overwhelmed by COVID-19 and begins sending sick people home?
2. Who can you contact to help you prepare your church members for safe home care of the sick? Who are your resource persons in government offices and with area health care providers? What resources or training, medicine and supplies can you mobilize at this stage of the crisis and to prepare for the future?
3. What are initial questions that you should ask of the sick person who needs to be cared for at home?

Activity:

- Using the information in this module, develop a plan for the safe and compassionate homecare of the sick in your church and community. Consider the potential needs of patients and caregivers, including how to ensure adequate PPE is available.

SECTION 6 – Care in times of death & grief

KEY CONCEPTS:

- Helping and supporting those who are dying.
- Encouraging hope and ministering to the spiritual needs of the dying.
- Supporting family and community during times of bereavement and grief.

NOTES:

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How will you respond if you are called to minister to a community member dying of COVID-19? Consider what you will do to protect yourself from infection and yet still be physically and emotionally present with them.
2. In the case that you may be caring for someone for whom there is no hope of recovery, what spiritual ministry can you offer them? What might they be most anxious about? How can the gospel reassure them and help them to die in confidence and peace?
3. After a person dies, what will be most helpful to their bereaved family, and what pitfalls of ministry should you avoid?

Referenced materials and recommended resources:

- International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (Psychosocial Centre) “Remote Psychological First Aid during the COVID-19 outbreak – interim guidance”, March 2020
<https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IFRC-PS-Centre-Remote-Psychological-First-Aid-during-a-COVID-19-outbreak-Interim-guidance.pdf>
- Tearfund, “Guidance for the local church” (short video clip on the seven important roles the church can play), 2020 [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A - B2uO6io&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3Xt8sXbbYJ_3NdEJ7MwFrdBlmqVLt6JscIcTnmEqiqvWKkgWtP8VS8Nio](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6A-B2uO6io&feature=share&fbclid=IwAR3Xt8sXbbYJ_3NdEJ7MwFrdBlmqVLt6JscIcTnmEqiqvWKkgWtP8VS8Nio)
- World Evangelical Alliance (WEA), “Caring for a Family Member with COVID-19 – Becoming the Accompanying Church”, 2020
<https://covid19.worlddea.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Caring-for-a-Family-Member-with-Covid-19-2.pdf>
- World Health Organization (WHO), “Home care for patients with COVID-19 presenting with mild symptoms and management of their contacts”, 2020
- [www.who.int/publications/i/item/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-\(ncov\)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts](http://www.who.int/publications/i/item/home-care-for-patients-with-suspected-novel-coronavirus-(ncov)-infection-presenting-with-mild-symptoms-and-management-of-contacts)
- World Vision International, “COVID-19: Guidance for Faith communities & Places of Worship”, 2020
<https://www.wvi.org/publications/faithresponsetocovid19>
- World Vision International, “Mitigating Stigma and Fear – Towards an Appropriate Christian Response to COVID-19”, 2020
<https://www.wvi.org/publications/coronavirus-health-crisis/mitigating-stigma-and-fear>