There is a lot of good advice out there about how not just to handle isolation but how to take advantage of it, to make some parts of your life better rather than worse. But it has occurred to me: people on this blog have some things in common, interests that we share. And I wonder if we can give some suggestions to each other about how blog-related interests can contribute to our mutual and individual well-being while we still plow through this crisis. So after giving a couple of suggestions, I’ll be asking you if you have one or two ideas to share with others.

Let me begin by saying that just about everything the sages among us are saying is absolutely right, when it comes to *general* or even *universal* advice. At least it’s all working well for me. I am exercising *more* not less, and have developed a very nice exercise regime that I follow every day. That not only helps me get my mind off my woes and, especially, my woes for the world at large (which are important to have, and I have them in abundance; but dwelling on them all day is not good for me or the world), as I work out in various ways, but also keeps me fit and feeling good physically.

So too with sleep: I’m getting every bit as much as I need. Now *that’s* a luxury for a lot of us. We should take advantage of it.

Many of you are not into meditation, but I have been for a few years now, and I have increased my practice. That’s helping a *ton*, making me calmer and again getting my mind off other things – in fact, in the form I’m practicing now, getting my mind off *everything*. It’s another way, along with sleep, to recharge the brain’s batteries to be alert and fresh.

The main other thing I’m doing – this finally gets to issues connected with the blog – is that I’m intentionally redirecting my extra time to doing things that I really have always wanted to do and simply didn’t have the hours in the day to do. In my case, that does not involve watching more TV or other things simply to give myself something to do and while away the hours. It involves consciously doing what makes me happy and feel good.

I’m choosing things to watch that are soothing for me. In this case (distantly related to the blog) I’ve decided to redirect my reading and viewing habits. About two months before the crisis hit, I started reading books and watching movies and TV series involving world-catastrophes. This was actually for *work* not for *pleasure.* My next book will be about how misinterpretations of the book of Revelation led to expectations that the world was soon to end, and that combined with other factors of modern life has seriously affected both fiction and film. In fiction it began (for my interests) with the 19th century fear of technology – starting with Frankenstein and continuing on till today through robots and AI generally; to the “bomb” threat starting in 1945 – all the nuclear disaster films etc; to climate change; to, yes, viruses. The earliest disaster movies arose out of fiction (you won’t believe who made the first Frankenstein movie: Thomas Edison!! That seems completely ironic and weird, if you know the book, until you see how he ends the film, with science triumphing over the monster it has created). Film then began to take on a life of its own and, as you know, there are roughly 3 trillion options now.

I continued with watching and reading all that even into the crisis, but about three weeks ago I decided to give it up for now. I really don’t need it at the moment. At all. (I’m not advising against it; I’m just saying that for me, it is, well, not a good time for it. I’ll get to my book later. I’m doing a different book now anyway, so there’s no rush).
Instead I’ve decided (this is unrelated to the blog) to read and watch stuff that I really deeply enjoy and that I find personally uplifting. And for now that involves costume dramas with happy endings (I just rewatched Howards End; next will to Ben Kingsley’s Silas Marner; then the Daniel Deronda series); and Victorian novels (started on one of Dickens’ very best, Bleak House; which actually does have a plague in it, but it’s an upbeat story despite the name).

BUT, to the blog. Many of you have always wanted “more time to read.” Now’s your time. And many of you are fascinated by understanding the New Testament, the historical Jesus, the books that didn’t make it into the New Testament, what happened in earliest Christianity, how the Bible was compiled, the significance of the Bible for modern ethics – e.g., issues connected with reproduction and sex and social policies and justice etc. And lots of other things. Why not throw yourself into reading some of the books in these fields – or any other – that you’re interested in?

On my own home front we’re doing something related that will clearly not be a choice of the masses, but it’s the *kind* of thing others could think of. I’ve been working on my Latin for a couple of years now; my wife Sarah is a medievalist and so was trained in ecclesiastical Latin. But she’s rusty (she moved on to Shakespeare about 20 years ago and there’s not a lot of Latin there…), and I need all the help I can get. So we’ve started reading the Latin Vulgate together. Really. In the evening, before dinner. It was her idea to start with Ecclesiastes, which I’ve never read in Latin before; after that we’ll move to Genesis.

And it’s been *great*. One of us reads a verse in Latin, the other translates it (we have dictionaries to hand!), and we go from there. Fantastic.

OK, so you probably ain’t gonna be doing *that*. But how ‘bout finding something that you and whomever you happen to be around or can connect with remotely read something together that you both would enjoy, and then talk about it? It could be simply a piece of fiction that makes you think and deal with issues important to you. Or it could be something non-fiction and instructive/informative. Even something connected with the Bible/early Christianity, if that’s your current passion.

These are hard times. For some people they are merely inconvenient; for others they are downright devastating or even life-destroying. If you have mental space and want to make yourself feel better, you need to take intentional steps to get there.

To that end:

Do YOU have suggestions connected with the blog you can make for others, things you’re trying? For example, can you recommend a blog-related that you’re read that you would HIGHLY suggest? Or an online resource? Is there something you’re doing that you think others could benefit from that are in some way connected with our shared interests?

If so, post a comment. I would suggest that you limit yourself to just ONE suggestion in your comment. You can certainly do more, of course, if you stick within the space limits. But will tell you with some confidence that even if you have lots of ideas and advice, if you explain ONE carefully it will have far more impact on people that if you shoot off two or six. So I recommend you give one. But if you really want to go for more – hey, you’ve got 200 words.

I wish all of you the very best, as we try to pull through all of this, both together and
individually. If there’s anything I can do on the blog to increase your happiness, do let me know!

Life after Death in the Bible and Beyond: Webinar with Oxford Press
The Not Old Better Show – Heaven and Hell Book Interview