



What Comes Next?

(What will life be like after the COVID-19 pandemic?)

Reflections on Possible Trends by Josh D. McDowell

1. Economic Climate

The economic climate will be characterized by a large number of bankruptcies. Why? Three months ago, many large stores and chains were teetering on the edge of bankruptcy because four-walled stores were being challenged by online giants like Amazon. Once the crisis is over, many retail establishments may not have the capacity to bounce back. This is not all bad. The COVID-19 lockdown will have a significant impact on people's buying habits.

2. Spiritual Climate

There will be a shift in the spiritual climate with greater interest in spiritual things – but not necessarily interest in churches. Many people are seeking to understand the current reality by asking “why?” questions. The Church will need to be ready to address issues relating to the goodness of God, anxiety, depression, mental health and relationships. Relevant topics for churches to address include “How to build relationships” and “How to be better connected.”

It's likely that “church” will be done differently. Online church services have taken on new significance and a much greater interest in small

groups and house gatherings may emerge as important ways of making personal connections. In the groups, there will most likely be an increased interest in relationships and faith.

3. **Emotional Climate**

Post-pandemic, a time characterized by intense anxiety, depression, loneliness and other mental health issues will be widespread. Three months ago, before COVID-19, three top themes in mental health that were reaching epidemic proportion were: 1) Pornography addiction, 2) Loneliness, and 3) Anxiety, depression, as well as other issues. These themes have been true globally in nearly every culture. The COVID-19 lockdown will not pacify any of the three previous epidemics. Isolation will only exacerbate anxiety, depression, pornography addiction, loneliness and mental health problems.

4. **Workforce Trends**

There are indications that the trend to work-at-home will continue. The work-at-home experiences during this virus crisis have allowed businesses and corporations to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of employees performing their responsibilities from remote locations. Organizations may decide to save money and reduce expenses through having smaller physical offices and deploying a remote workforce.

5. **Baby Boom**

A baby boom nine months from now is a real possibility. While the COVID-19 crisis is different from the crises of 9/11, Pearl Harbor, etc., couples who have been isolated for a month or more may end up expanding their families whether intentionally or unintentionally.

6. **Divorce Surge**

Many marriages may breakdown – especially those that were struggling pre-pandemic. The pandemic-imposed isolation will accentuate financial stress, as well as feelings of disconnection, loneliness, anxiety, and fears

of job loss. These stressors could become tipping points for struggling couples.

7. Educational Shifts

Parents may be facing a mix of emotions. The lockdown may well convince many, “No way with homeschooling”, because they feel overwhelmed at taking on this task. Other parents may develop very positive attitudes about schooling at home. Schools will need to evaluate a new or different approach to educating our children. College and university students that have moved home present additional shifts in family life that could have positive or negative impacts.

8. Pornography Addiction

One of the major crises of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the explosion of addiction to pornography. Why? The human isolation of home lockdown feeds into most things that trigger porn addiction, i.e., loneliness, fear, stress, anxiety, depression and isolation. Any one of these tremendously enhances the appeal of porn. The cumulative effect of all of these issues can be devastating.

In order to feed porn into more lives, Pornhub, the world’s largest porn site, gave Italy one month of free “extreme porn.” On March 25th, it made its premium content available for free worldwide for one month.