

Quarantine Principles

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Everyone is very familiar with the horrific example of what ignorance of good sanitation and proper quarantine can cause. During the 14th century, bubonic and pneumonic plagues struck Asia and spread to Russia, Persia, Turkey, North Africa and Europe. It is estimated that as many as 1/3 of the European population died during that time. The plague relentlessly, devastated cities and villages, with some villages totally disappearing. Panic and confusion were rampant and death was everywhere. The toll was so great that bodies were thrown into huge pits as mass graves.

The Jewish physician Balavignus lived in those times and saw that miserable sanitation was a major factor in the spread of disease. So, he instituted a clean-up and quarantine movement among the Jews. As a result, the rats left the Jewish ghettos and moved into the non-Jewish sectors of the city. Because of this decisive action, the Jews' mortality rate from the plague was only 5% of what it was among their non-Jewish neighbors.

The general population soon saw the difference, but instead of emulating the Jewish quarantine and hygienic measures, the non-Jewish people began accusing the Jews of causing the plague and poisoning wells.

Because of the mass superstitious hysteria, fueled by the Catholic priests, a general massacre of the Jews began. Balavignus was persecuted and tortured, and finally was coerced to "confess" that he and other Jews were responsible for the disease, even though it was not true.

Quarantine Defined

The United States Center for Disease Control (CDC) defines quarantine in this way:

To isolate an individual who has or is suspected of having a disease, in order to prevent spreading the disease to others; alternately, to isolate a person who does not have a disease during disease outbreak, in order to prevent that person from catching the disease. Quarantine can be voluntary or ordered by public health officials in times of emergency.

Quarantine has been an effective way of isolating and stopping the spread of

contagious sickness and disease for millennia among the descendants of the ancient Israelites, but the rest of the world tends toward ignorance. Today, however, it is a principle of health, which is not taught or encouraged among the general populace. Therefore, it is not regularly practiced among the general populace. Although the authorities of this nation understand the concept of quarantine, individual citizens generally think it applies to everyone else, so its effectiveness is limited at best.

Only for the most severe diseases do the health officials in this country call for quarantine of any scale. Sometimes sick people think they are so indispensable at work that they feel justified in going to work while contagious. Just pop a cold pill, and since they feel better they go out in public and contaminate dozens of people while still contagious. AIDS is a modern-day example of how even such a horrible disease can be so politicized that even the obvious logic of quarantine is ignored.

A Biblical Principle

Strictly speaking, the Bible is not a health textbook or medical manual. But it does lay the foundation of knowledge, and reveals many health laws which mankind has needed thousands of years to rediscover. God lovingly gave the Israelites the principles of quarantining the sick in Leviticus 13 and Numbers 5 where He used examples of leprosy to represent any contagious sickness or disease.

Speaking of the biblical laws regarding leprosy, Dr. D.T. Atkinson, the author of *Magic, Myth and Medicine*, states on page 58,

The laws of health laid down in Leviticus are the basis of modern sanitary science. Moses ordered that cases of leprosy should be segregated [or, you could say "quarantined"], that dwellings from which infected Jews had gone should be inspected before again being occupied, and that persons recovering from contagious disease were not to be allowed to go abroad until examined. The modern quarantine harks back to these sanitary regulations of the Old Testament.

Leviticus 13 records the health law God gave to Moses to combat the spread of disease.

Leviticus 13:1-2 And the LORD spoke to Moses and Aaron, saying: "When a man has on the skin of his body a swelling, a scab, or a bright spot, and it becomes on the skin of his body like a leprous sore [notice that it says "*like* a

leprous sore;" it does not have to be leprosy, it could be any contagious disease], then he shall be brought to Aaron the priest or to one of his sons the priests.

Dr. Atkinson also had a comment to make on page 64:

It is most singular that a description of leprosy, as found in the 13th chapter of Leviticus, could have been written so long before our time. It is to be noticed that such an accurate description of this dread malady as it appears in the Biblical narrative is not to be found in the literature of any nation for the next 1700 years.

The disease translated "leprosy" was not limited to Hansen's disease (what we call "leprosy" today). A close reading of Leviticus 13-14 reveals the sick were expected to recover, unlike the incurable, but treatable, Hansen's disease.

Quarantine periods were usually temporary. A priest would inspect the illness and impose the quarantine. Then he would re-inspect the sick at regular seven-day intervals to look for any improvement. The priest's responsibility and power was not only as a worship leader, he was also a civil leader, judge, and medical practitioner. This all-encompassing role gave the Levitical priesthood extraordinary authority.

Leviticus 13:43-45 Then the priest shall examine it; and indeed if the swelling of the sore is reddish-white on his bald head or on his bald forehead, as the appearance of leprosy on the skin of the body, he is a leprous man. He is unclean. The priest shall surely pronounce him unclean; his sore is on his head. Now the leper on whom the sore is, his clothes shall be torn and his head bare; and he shall cover his mustache, and cry, 'Unclean! Unclean!'

We are not to hide if we are sick; if someone is around, we need to warn him. That is part of the principle of this.

Leviticus 13:46 He shall be unclean. All the days he has the sore he shall be unclean. He is unclean [notice it says that three times in that verse alone; it emphasizes how unclean that is], and he shall dwell alone; his dwelling shall be outside the camp.

Notice here that the infected person was to take on mannerisms that warned others of the disease. Torn clothing, covering over his mouth, and the call "Unclean! Unclean!" Now, we don't have to walk around saying, "I have a cold! I have a cold!" but we should treat colds in a similar way. The "Unclean! Unclean!" warning was meant to separate the community from those in quarantine. The infected were expected to live outside the community until they were completely over any contagious symptom.

Luke records in Luke 17:12-19 the incident where Jesus healed the 10 lepers and only one was thankful and glorified God. This is typical of society; once they are over something, they do not think back to even wonder if God had anything to do with it. The account mentions that they "stood a far off." They quarantined themselves and/or were quarantined by the priests.

There is a stigma attached to the idea of being quarantined for a sickness. At Sabbath services and God's Feasts, we sometimes see the "living dead"—those who, even though they are suffering from an infectious sickness or disease, walk into church, spreading their illnesses to others. They should stay home from church services that day and call a church elder for anointing and prayer. There is no shame, disgrace, or dishonor in doing this. Sickness can come from any number of areas. We can cause it ourselves, or it can come from society, or—as we know—from catching it from others. It is the right thing to do according to the inspired written word of God—to call upon an elder of the church of anointing and prayer if there is sickness, and if it is a contagious sickness, to avoid coming to Sabbath or Holy Day services.

At one Feast of Tabernacles, I anointed more than 25 people for sicknesses, and I know that Richard anointed close to that himself. Not all, but much of that was because the quarantine laws of God were ignored that year at the Feast. Members were coming to services sick.

Here are some points to remember regarding quarantine:

1. Take precaution to quarantine first. Don't wait to have infection confirmed, because it is often too late by then, since you've already spread it.
2. Quarantine is not a stigma. It is one of God's health laws. Sometimes we feel that if we separate ourselves, it will somehow make us look bad. There's no reason for this attitude other than pride. Also, remember that quarantining ourselves when we have a contagious sickness is a loving action. I have heard some people says, "It is just a cold." Well, I don't want your "just a cold," and neither does anybody else. We have to remember that—that colds are miserable things, and we shouldn't want to put somebody through that.

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3. Don't make your own home diagnosis of serious conditions, as some of us sometimes do. If we don't have experience with the serious symptoms that the sick person has, we must learn exactly what the problem is, so we can properly treat and quarantine, or not quarantine, the person.
4. Keep an eye open for contagious nasal discharges, rashes, sores, itches and high temperatures, both in yourself and your children. I realize that there are allergies at times. Right now I think the grass pollen count is very high, and people have runny noses from allergies. But I have also heard people who have had colds say that they were allergies, wanting to believe that, but in reality they weren't. So, make sure of what it is.
5. Don't come to services sick—please don't, we ask you—with a contagious cold, flu or other contagious disease.

As God's people, we should be a model community in terms of cleanliness, hygiene and exercising these quarantine laws. We can practice giving, in the right way, by *not* giving our illnesses to others, but instead providing a healthy environment to everyone around us. Quarantining ourselves is an act of love that qualifies as a “work” in the context of a works part of faith.

Any man, woman or child who is sick should not attend services or fellowship with other members so they do not infect anyone else. This is an important way to give, sacrifice and show love to others. Please use wisdom in this area. We all want one another to be at services whenever possible, but we also realize we should follow God's quarantine laws.