

Who can we trust? Who can we believe? One of the challenges of the western media is that their business model is based on ratings and revenue, which means they play to our fears. We are left wondering “Is it really that bad?” One of the challenges of the media from closed access countries is that they are driven by a steadfast commitment to “always honor / never shame” the ruling authorities. We are left wondering “Is there more to it than this?”

BBC refers to the coronavirus as “a serious and imminent global threat.” As I write there are 40,000 *reported* cases of the virus globally (most of which are in China) and the total number of *reported* deaths in China are 908 (<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-51442314>).

As “serious and imminent” a threat as this virus is, perhaps a greater threat is the fear it is raising and the backlash humanity inflicts on one another. For example, we have seen storefront signs in Thailand saying “No Chinese welcome.” In many cities there is panic buying of basic necessities as store shelves sit empty. Many question the effectiveness of face masks yet thousands wait hours in line to stock pile them.

One additional comparison – a reported 6,600 people in the US have died from the flu this season and among them 39 children (<https://thehill.com/changing-america/well-being/prevention-cures/478834-39-children-have-died-during-the-2019-2020-flu>).

So, coronavirus – how dangerous is it? It is real. Those who encounter it may find themselves in a battle for their life. And those who care for those infected risk their lives simply to give care. For those of us serving in SE Asia, we are quite safe with basic everyday precautions as simple as frequent hand washing. The risk begins to increase for those who travel into mainland China and specifically the city of Wuhan which is reported to be the epicenter. In all reality, you back home are much more likely to get the flu than we are to get this coronavirus. Both are real and should not be scoffed at.

If I may, I would like to close with a tribute to Dr. Li Wen Liang who recently died after trying to warn others about the outbreak of this disease. His warning was at first perceived as “shaming” those in authority and he was reprimanded and forced to offer an apology of sorts. I have read that this thirty-three year old doctor was a man of faith who left behind an expectant wife, young children and aging parents. Nearing death he wrote a letter

and closed with this verse: "I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race. I have kept the faith. Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness..." (2 Timothy 4:7-8)

a friend,
Roger and Ellen