

## **Examining Causes and Implications of COVID 19 pandemic from Religious Education Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

This paper examines the Religious Education (RE) perspective of the causes of disease epidemics and plagues such as COVID 19 from the lenses of biblical teachings. The COVID 19 that started in China in December 2019 and has caused unforetold suffering and death globally, hitting hard on developed countries such as; China, Italy, Britain, Spain, and the United States. At the time of carrying out this study, more than 1,000,000 people had died from COVID and over 30,000,000 were confirmed infected cases in at least 177 countries the world over (World Health Organization, 2020). The global spread of coronavirus has proved to the world that there is no superpower and no man-made technological advancement can replace God's supernatural power and the virus spares no one. From a biblical perspective, human trust in political and economic power, technology, nations embracing homosexuality/lesbianism as normal, human arrogance and pride, oppression of the poor, religious hypocrisy in churches and mosques all have the potential to ignite God's wrath. Coronavirus shut down cities, public transport, and businesses and created an economic, social, and political crisis at a global level. Public means of transport like buses, trains, taxis, personal cars, and motorcycles are all out of use. Air spaces are empty and many airports around the world are closed, Entebbe airport of Uganda inclusive. In many countries, passenger planes are grounded. Even borders are closed, and human quarantine is the order of the day. No movements of citizens from one country to another. The tourism industry is down, many hotels are empty, restaurants; shopping malls, and shops are closed. Prostitutes and criminals have been rendered out of action by the pandemic. Every country is nursing its citizens, fighting an unseen tiny enemy called COVID 19. Many firms and financial institutions have laid off their workers, and now people have to struggle to bring food for the family on the table. The majority of the poor are lacking everything especially food. People have been confined to their homes, businesses are closed, schools and institutions of learning are closed. Sick people and pregnant mothers are confined to their homes, they have no means of transport to reach health centers for treatment. There are no more parties to attend, no night clubs, no hangouts to meet up with friends, no weddings, no discos, no soccer matches, and too many people on the streets, and even money banked on accounts is useless. The global lockdown has brought silence in the streets, cars are just parked there, demobilized. Hundreds of bodies in the most affected countries are buried in mass graves and family members are unable to arrange for funerals of their relatives because of the stigma and isolation attached to the diseases. The entire world is quiet, nobody can travel to outside countries for medical treatment, business, or conferences. People have died from the COVID 19 pandemic in large numbers daily in countries like Italy, Spain, India, Brazil, South Africa, and the USA. Even superpowers are failing to contain this disease because at the moment, there is no cure or vaccine for it. Due to the negative effects of the virus, nothing else in life seems to be very important. Spouses who have been avoiding one another are now locked together and this has increased domestic violence. Against this backdrop, many Christians have raised questions about whether or not, COVID 19 is a

punishment from God. This narrative is based on the teachings from Leviticus 26; 14-46 and Deuteronomy 28; 15-68 which spells out God's wrath upon the disobedience of mankind. Deuteronomy 28; 59, says "I will send on your descendant's incurable diseases and epidemics that cannot be stopped" because you disobeyed the law. From a religious perspective, COVID 19 events point the call to repentance and a return to God as in Amos 5, 8; 4-14. Coronavirus is a wake-up call that this world is temporary and no matter how much we struggle and accumulate wealth in life, death awaits us and it's a reality that life is vanity (Ecclesiastes 12) that science cannot challenge.

**Keywords; Causes, implications, Coronavirus, Religious Education, Epidemics, Pandemics, Diseases, Plagues, Biblical teachings**

### **Introduction**

Globally, the world has experienced a series of pandemics in human history, the most well known in the past among others was the Spanish flu of 1918 -1928 which left 500million people infected about a third of the world's population at that time. The flu caused the death toll of an estimated population of 17-50 million people, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history (Barrier & Hilliker, 2020). Furthermore, a similar pandemic of the 21st century was reported on 31st- December- 2019 by health officials in China in the Wuhan market where cases of serious respiratory sickness in people were identified. The Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV2) outbreak was linked to a novel coronavirus which was later given the innocuous name COVID 19(WHO,2020). On 11th -March-2020, WHO declared COVID 19 a global public health emergency due to the manner in which the deadly virus was spreading and causing death to the majority of populations in affected areas of the world. By the time COVID 19 was declared by WHO as a pandemic, it had spread to Europe, the United States, and Africa. The infection was identified to produce an illness known as coronavirus disease which showed signs of fever, cough, and shortness of breath (Kara,2020). W.H.O (2020) warned that there is no vaccine to protect people against COVID 19 and there is no specific antiviral treatment for COVID 19. At the time of writing this paper, the Coronavirus outbreak which started in China had now become a global epidemic spread to countries such as; Asia, Europe, Australia, America, and Africa. If unchecked, the virus could infect 60 percent of the world's population. COVID 19 has impacted religion in various ways including the lockdown of worshipping places and celebrations of religious festivals. Against this background, a reverend father from Italy is quoted as saying; "COVID 19 has turned the Church in the tiny Lombard town of Seriate to be confronted by a host of coffins before they are taken to be cremated. This week, 27th of March,2020, it is something devastating when I came to a church in the tiny Lombard, the town of Seriate to host of coffins before they are taken by military convoy to be cremated. Dozens of dead bodies from COVID 19 were lined up in two neat rows down the central aisle, and were immediately replaced by new ones when they were taken away". Churches have been closed, are empty, worship services of various faiths, and observance of religious festivals have been canceled. Churches offer worship online amidst the pandemic and lockdown. Different religious forums have continued to pray online for an end of COVID 19 and God's provision during the lockdown. Jeremiah 7;1-15 prophesied of the closure of churches due to empty summons that took place there with sinful and unrepentant people.

In Italy, religious people were facing the situation of COVID -19 with great serenity, in March, 20th 2020, 59 religious sisters belonging to two convents had tested positive for COVID 19 virus, remained isolated, with meals left outside their doors (Pope Francis,2020). COVID 19 treats its victims like lepers as mentioned in the book of Leviticus chapter 13 which says; "A

person who has a dreaded skin disease must wear torn clothes, leave his hair uncombed, cover the lower part of his face and call out 'unclean, unclean'. He remains unclean as long as he has the disease and he must live outside the camp away from others (Lev13;45-46)". COVID 19 victims are isolated for treatment including those who get in contact with its victims, they are isolated and quarantined for 14 days as a measure to contain the spread of the virus (WHO,2020). In the past, people who had leprosy were quarantined and isolated from their communities. In the late 1800s, when leprosy was sweeping across the USA, people of Asian origin were unjustly treated and stigmatized as though they were the cause of leprosy. Lepers were a threat to the communities in which they lived, they were treated as outcasts and sometimes believed to be sinners who were serving a punishment that the disease inflicted on them. Stigmatization led victims of leprosy to avoid going for treatment in hospitals for fear of being isolated. The delay in accessing treatment leads to serious lifelong disabilities, loss of limbs, and even death. Like leprosy victims, COVID suspects are isolated and stigmatized, borders and airports have all been closed to contain COVID 19. Some victims of the pandemic quarantine themselves in their houses leading to their deaths without accessing treatment (Eckert & Palm,2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, World Health Organization (2020) confirmed that coronavirus had been reported in over 30 countries, with cases of the diseases on daily increase and these included; Egypt (102,141 and 5,787 deaths ),Algeria (50,214 and 1,689 deaths ), Ghana (1,640 and 41 deaths ), Uganda (6,468 and 63 deaths),Rwanda (4439 and 20 deaths),Guinea (10,344 and 65 deaths),Burundi (473 and 1 death), Ethiopia (70,422 and 1,127 deaths ),South Sudan(2,592 and 49 deaths),Sudan (13,555 and 836 deaths), Zimbabwe(7,683 and 225 deaths),Chad (1,087 and 81 deaths),Niger (1,180 and 69 deaths), Angola(4,117 and 154 deaths),Cameroon(20,431 and 416 deaths),Congo(10,519 and 271 deaths),Zambia(14,175 and 331 deaths),Angola(4,117 and 331deaths),Gabon (8,704 and 54 deaths) etc. South Africa and Egypt top the list of coronavirus cases, and Tanzania's statistics are not reflected by WHO (2020) at the time of this study. With this rising trend of the spread of the disease. Africa and the rest of the world, Christians are trying to search for answers from what biblical teachings say about pandemics and the lessons to be learned.

The level at which COVID 19 has spread the world over claiming lives, has prompted many people to ask whether it is a sign of the end of times. In East Africa, NTV (2020) acknowledges that the world needs urgent God's intervention because Coronavirus is claiming lives of people country by country. In Uganda since the outbreak of the disease, the government has put in place several measures to contain its spread. It started by banning all cultural, social, political, and any form of gatherings in schools, universities, churches, mosques, markets, bars, and all other places that attract people. Public transport was also stopped (The Monitor,2020). The President of Uganda is quoted by NTV (2020) saying, "We cannot do enough in the face of Coronavirus unless God is with us, therefore we should hold prayers as a nation at state house Entebbe".

Christians have asked why a merciful God allows pandemics to cause pain, sorrow, and even death to the people He created. The Bible describes various pestilences that God used to bring back to Himself of the sinning people. This was meant to persuade people into repentance and recognition of his power as described in Exodus, Noah's floods, and other plagues inflicted on Israel due to their disobedience. In Mathew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, Jesus describes the end of times through events and tripartitions that will cause panic and trials of all kinds that will bring humanity back to God. When the disciples asked Jesus when the world will come to an

end, Jesus described the events as in Luke 21;10, "Nation will rise against nation, and Kingdom against Kingdom, there will be great earthquakes, famines, and pestilences in various places, fearful events, and great signs from heaven. It is against this background that this paper, in particular, offers biblical reflections on the causes of pestilences (disasters or diseases, illnesses, and plagues) and challenges believers not to fear but to look for answers in biblical teachings and what God is saying to humanity amidst COVID 19 pandemic.

### **The Old Testament teachings on the causes of diseases, illnesses, and plagues**

Teacher trainers of Religious education students have always questioned whether outbreaks of pandemics such as leprosy, Ebola, measles, and now coronavirus are signs of God's anger against humanity for their disobedience and whether they are the signs of the end times. In Genesis 11;1-9, humanity which was united by speaking one language wanted to make a name for themselves by building a very tall tower of Babylon, but God punished them by making them speak different languages so that they are confused, scattered all over the world so as not to plan together. In Genesis 19;1-29 God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire because of the sin of homosexuality. According to Dattolo (2020) in the Old Testament, God promises His people to reward them for their good deeds but promises to punish them if they go against his command. In contemporary society, various outbreaks of disease epidemics, such as the coronavirus, have prompted many people to ask why God allows or even causes pandemic diseases, illnesses and plagues to be inflicted on his people. Many people have asked themselves unanswered questions whether COVID 19, the invasion of locusts, earthquakes, and floods are signs of the end of times. The old testament indicates that whereas God had created humanity to live forever, in Genesis 6;1-8, He regretted why He created human beings and punished their increasing wickedness by reducing the number of years of their lives. The Old Testament describes numerous occasions when God brought plagues and diseases on His people and on His enemies "to make them feel His power as reflected in Exodus chapters 7-12.

God used plagues on Egypt to force the Pharaoh to free the Israelites from bondage, while sparing His people from being affected by them, thus, indicating His sovereign control over diseases and other afflictions. In the same way, God will pour out plagues on sinful humanity in times of tribulation to force people to have faith in Him. In Leviticus 26;21-25 God warned Israel of the consequences of disobedience including inflicting on them plagues. In numbers 16;49 and 25;9, on two occasions God destroyed 14,700 and 24,000 people respectively for various acts of disobedience. The old testament shows that after giving the Mosaic law, God commanded the Israelites to obey it or suffer many evils including diseases and plagues. Deuteronomy 28;22 clearly says "The Lord will strike you with wasting disease, with fever and inflammation which will plague you until you perish". The purpose of using plagues and diseases against the people of Israel was to call them to repentance and recognize God as their creator and supreme authority.

In 2Chronicles 7;13-14 when God appeared to Solomon, He said to him; "Whenever I hold back the rain or send locusts to eat up the crops or send an epidemic on my people, If my people who are called by my name pray to me and repent and turn away from the evil they have been committing, then I will hear them in heaven, forgive their sins and heal their land". In the old testament, God used epidemics to draw his people to himself and bring about repentance. Leviticus 26;14-46 and Deuteronomy 28;5-68 explicitly spell out punishments for human disobedience; "If you refuse to obey my laws and commands, I will bring disaster on you; incurable diseases and fevers that will make you blind and cause your life to waste away



(Lev.26;16-17). Deuteronomy 28;59-61 says that "If you do not obey faithfully all God's teachings that are written in this book, He will send on you and on your descendants' incurable diseases and horrible epidemics that cannot be stopped. He will bring on you once again all the dreadful diseases you experienced in Egypt and you will never recover. He will send you all kinds of diseases and epidemics that are not mentioned in this book of God's laws and teachings and you will be destroyed "The old testament teachings emphasize obedience of Gods law in return for obedience, and destruction and judgment in return for disobedience.

The old testament further points out that when the Philistines captured the Ark of the covenant, Yahweh afflicted them with tumors, caused a deathly panic, and cry all over the land (1Sam 5;6-12). God punished sinful Israel with wars, famine, drought, and wild beasts (Ezekiel 14;21, Deut 32;24-26). God also punished Israel with pestilence because of their unfaithfulness. For example, in response to David's sinful census, Yahweh struck the land with a sword of pestilence and 70,000 men of Israel perished (1Chron 21;1-12). King Jeroboam led Israel into idolatry leading Yahweh to strike him with a severe incurable disease in his bowels which made him die in great agony (2Chron 21;12-19). Prophet Elijah pronounced drought for the King of Israel because of bad leadership of the kings and idolatry or the worship of Baal by the people of Israel (1Kings 17;1-7 and 18). King Jehu killed all the worshipers of Baal sparing none (2Kings 10;18-31). In the Old Testament, there are very strict quarantine regulations for those suffering from infectious diseases (Leviticus 13), and Isaiah 24 points out that God will punish the earth and leave it desolate. The old testament emphasizes that Yahweh has the ultimate authority to wound and to heal (Deut 32;39, Job 5;18). The prophets of Israel anticipated the day when Yahweh will gather his scattered, afflicted people to heal their physical and spiritual wounds and also to heal them from apostasy. Diseases, illnesses, and plagues inflicted on people in the old testament were meant to bring people back to God and to experience his authority. The scourge of suffering and the hope of restoration moved God's people to head to Hosea's call; "Come let us return to God for he has torn us, that he may heal us, he has struck us down and He will bind us up (Hosea 6;)"

God hates idolatry (Exodus 20;3). Idolatry in our modern times revolves around worshipping leaders, money, power, property, and seeking recognition. Ezekiel 7 prophesies the destruction of the Jewish economy and called His people to put away idols. God punishes idolatry with fire, famine, plagues, and illnesses. Exodus 15;26 says, "If you diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God and do that which is right in his eyes and give ear to his commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord your healer". In Deuteronomy 28;1-45, God promised His people prosperity, if they obeyed his command and destruction in case, they disobeyed His commandments. Deuteronomy 30;19; 15-20 says, "I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before your life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore, choose life, that both you and your seed may live". According to Christos (2019), this command goes beyond just the natural consequences for obeying or disobeying God's laws. God said He would bless for obedience and curse for disobedience. When the Israelites obeyed, He prospered them; when they rebelled, He sent plagues, disease epidemics such as COVID 19 or turned the weather against them, or removed His protection and allowed them to go into captivity or made them experience the massive killings by their enemies.

In a related but different incident, God used diseases and plagues to reveal his power, for example, He permitted Satan to inflict disease upon Job so that He could reveal His majesty and

power to His faithful servant (Job, 42). Exodus 15;26 says, "If you diligently listen to the voice of the Lord your God and do that which is right in His eyes, and give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord your healer. God also uses pestilence to call His people back to Himself like the flood story in Genesis 7-9, the vision of locusts in Amos 7, and the fiery serpents in Numbers 21;6-9. Amos 4;10 says; "I sent a plague on you like the one I sent on Egypt. I killed your young men in battle and took your horses away. I filled your nostrils with the stink of the dead bodies in your camps, still, you did not come back to me. I destroyed some of you as I destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah. Those of you who survived were like a burning stick saved from a fire, still, you did not come back to Me. People of Israel, I am going to punish you and because I am going to do this, get ready to face My judgment". Isaiah 26; 20 -21 adds; "Go into your houses My people and shut the door behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until the lord's anger has passed. The Lord is coming from His heavenly dwelling place to punish the people of the earth for their sins". When people refuse to repent, God passes judgment on His people using plagues such as COVID 19. But there is hope for those who repent and turn from their evil ways. 2Chronicles 7, says;" If My people who are called by name humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then, I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land. Psalms 91:10 assures believers that "no evil shall be allowed to befall us, no plague come near our tent "including coronavirus.

### **The New Testament perspective of incurable diseases, illnesses, and pandemics**

The New Testament has prophesied on deadly diseases/pestilences as indicated in Luke 21, where Jesus predicted disease epidemics such as coronavirus as one of the signs of the end of the world. Mathew 24 also prophesied of the pestilences that would depict the end of the world. Throughout the bible, many plagues and diseases have caused fear and death and their purpose was to call people to repentance. Plagues cause pain but Jesus promised believers that he will always be by their side at all times as reflected in Hebrews 13;5, whereas in John 14;27, Jesus told his followers not to be troubled because he was with them no matter what the situation or circumstances were.

Plagues mentioned in the New Testament describe the end of days on earth. With the COVID 19 outbreak that has hit the whole world, people are wondering whether the pandemic is a plague sent by God to punish sinful humanity or whether it a natural phenomenon. The manifestations of COVID 19 expressed in death, widespread infections, fear among people, economic collapse, lack of food, psychological torture leading to suicide, increased domestic violence, and loss of jobs seem to be hints of foreshadowing of the end of times. In the New Testament, Paul assures us that God reveals His power through our weak bodies. 2Corinthians 4;7, says, but this precious treasure, this light, and power that now shine within us are held in a perishable container that is in our weak bodies. Everyone can see that the glorious power within us must be from God and not our own. This assurance from Paul should help Christians stand firm and repent in the face of COVID 19 that is purging humanity.

At the same time in Mathew 6;24, Jesus reminded his disciples that no one can serve two masters at ago (money and God). One has to choose one and forego the other. Greed is idolatry and it contravenes God's exclusive rights to human love, trust, and obedience. Christians should know that money and wealth can neither save us nor can they offer true security for the future, only God can. This explains why during COVID 19 outbreak, the Italians were pouring out their money from the balcony of their houses during the lockdown because it could not save them

from dying and getting infected from the pandemic (The Monitor,2020). Jesus assures His followers of His care as God does to the sparrows of the air and flowers.

Besides, in Mathew 9:35, 10:1 and Mark 3:10, Jesus healed every disease and sickness as well as getting rid of plagues. In the old testament God used plagues and diseases to show his power to the Israelites, while in the New Testament, Jesus healed plagues and diseases as an exhibition of his power and to prove that he was the Son of God. With COVID 19 purging the world, it is an indication that God still allows sicknesses for His purposes and COVID 19 can be regarded as a punishment from God due to the fallen humanity in the world. The escalation of COVID 19 is a foretaste of plagues that will be part of the end times which Jesus referred to in Luke 21:1. In the book of revelations 11:6 John saw two witnesses who had the authority to shut up the sky so that there was no rain during the time they proclaimed God's message. They had authority over springs of water to turn them into blood, they also had authority to strike the earth with every kind of plague as they wished. In Revelations 16, seven angels will strike the earth with every kind of plague. For those who do not believe in what Christ can do to sinful humanity, COVID 19 should be a reminder that life on earth, property, business, and money are tenuous and can be lost anytime. But for those who are believers in Christ, plagues such as COVID 19 should bring a re-assurance of salvation and hope of eternity because of the blood of Christ that was shed on the cross for us for our redemption (Isaiah 53:5, 2Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 9:28). In Luke 21:11, the writer points out that; "There will be terrible earthquakes, famine and plagues everywhere, there will be strange and terrifying things coming from the sky". The book of revelations talks about a significant portion of humanity that will be wiped out by disease and pestilence. The book of revelations 13: 16 -17 predicts the lockdown of religious institutions the world over; "The beast forced all the people, small and great, rich and poor, slave and free to have a mark placed on their right hands or their foreheads. No one could buy or sell without this mark, that is, the beasts' name or the number that stands for its name". Testing for coronavirus and wearing masks at a global level, as a preventative measure against the pandemic, is one of the indications of the mark of the beast. Today, no one can appear in markets, hospitals, banks, schools, churches, and all other public places without a mask to prevent coronavirus infections.

The good news is that in the New Testament, Jesus healed "every disease and every sickness," as well as plagues in the areas He visited (Matthew 9:35; 10:1; Mark 3:10). Just as God chose to use plagues and disease to show His power to the Israelites, Jesus healed as an exhibition of the same power to verify that He is truly the Son of God. He gave the same healing power to the disciples to verify their ministry (Luke 9:1). God still allows sickness for His purposes, but sometimes even worldwide pandemics, are simply the result of living in a fallen world. There is no way to determine whether or not a pandemic has a specific spiritual cause, but we do know that God has sovereign control over all things (Romans 11:36) and will work all things together for the good of those who know and love Him (Romans 8:28). The spread of sicknesses such as the coronavirus is a premonition of pandemics that will be part of the end times. Jesus referred to future plagues associated with the last days (Luke 21:11).

### **Secularism and People's Evasion of God**

Changes in demographic structure, shifting income distribution and erosion of traditional cultural reference all increase social diversity. However, if social diversity is ill-managed, unacceptable inequalities will emerge in income, wealth, and health conditions in the society, further deepening the segregation of disadvantaged groups. In case the backlashes of cultural

diversity triumph, uniformity can dovetail with intolerant forms of nationalisms or religious fundamentalism. The 21st century is characterized by serious secularism in many societies. Man has alienated himself from God and the sense of sacredness has disappeared in most parts of the globe. The outburst in technology, knowledge, and powerful economy has made man more "superior" and God has no role to play in the history of mankind to date. Many churches are collapsing in Europe and America, people have become too proud and busy to attend religious functions. Today amidst COVID 19 pandemic with strict lockdown measures across the globe, has led many people to question the necessities of faith and the significance of God in human affairs. People have questioned; 'If churches are closed, but people are still surviving, then, does humanity need God and prayers? while others are doubting the power of God in combating this virus. All these are traces of the misrepresentation of human rights and freedoms that dominate America and European countries. The outbreak of Coronavirus has challenged this mentality and people have started rediscovering the role of God in their lives.

On the other hand, the 21st century is also marked with the other extremes of exaggerated spirituality, religiosity, and holiness among some self-proclaimed preachers across the world. In Uganda, many of these preachers or 'men of God' shocked the population as one of them claimed "to have seen COVID 19 looming in his dream in 2019 but feared to declare it publicly", others assumed powerful titles of prophets, evangelists, the anointed servants, and others, having extraordinary powers of healing, performing miracles and many other unique qualities (Takongwa, 2020). This explains why these churches are planted everywhere in the society. The main concern about these religious leaders is that they extort money from worshipping believers and urging them on televisions to send in their offerings and tithes on mobile money, without paying attention to the alarming condition of many Ugandans who are spending nights on empty stomachs. This pandemic has exposed these self-styled men of God with their false prophecies and selfish misrepresentation and interpretation of the scriptures; it has opened up the eyes of many people in the country to discern true from false men of God. Many of these 'pastors' are always being attacked on social media especially those who prophesized that COVID 19 would not reach Uganda or it would no longer be there by the 29th March 2020, yet, it is on the increase at the time of writing this paper.

### **Social and Moral issues**

Though we appreciate the opportunities brought about by the dawn of the 21st century, many social and moral challenges still puzzle the majority of the people. Today's society is faced with many social challenges: family breakdown, selfishness, individualism, social stratification between the poor and rich, unemployment, poverty, the unguided pursuit of freedom, drug addictions, and many more. Bad governance, corruption, same sex marriage, legalized abortions, human trafficking and slavery are ills in society that have the potential to ignite God's anger to punish humanity with pandemics and diseases. COVID 19 is affecting all people irrespective of their social classes of the population. This pandemic cuts across the population example, the Prime Minister and the Royal family in the U.K were all infected irrespective of their powerful positions in Britain, the president of Brazil, Mr and Mrs Trump of USA were equally infected by the virus.

Besides, many stakeholders are using the COVID 19 pandemic for their selfish gains. For instance, in Uganda, the controversial 10 billion shillings the Members of Parliament awarded themselves as facilitation for the fight against the pandemic was highly criticized by the



population and the president himself arguing that; “it is morally reprehensible for the members’ of parliament to award themselves the 20 million shillings each at this time when the country is in crisis” (12th presidential address on COVID 19). The same incidence was noted where some officials in the office of the Prime Minister were arrested and remanded for inflating the prices of maize and beans to be distributed to the population; surprisingly, they were released on bond on the grounds that the state lacks substantial evidence against them.

Today, many people have lost the sense of right and wrong. COVID 19 is a call to the population to rediscover this sense as was pointed by Pope Francis; to rediscover the values of families, prayer, and staying together. This same call was also made by the Catholic Bishops of Uganda (Uganda Episcopal Conference) in their decree on COVID 19. Benedict (2020) says that sufferings like those inflicted by the coronavirus are transformed to be a means of God's care for us. We are disciplined by God to bear a greater good (Heb. 12:7-11); we learn to endure trials for the sake of knowing and sharing the miracle of God's comforting love. We have God's promise that whatever happens to us, including the good and the bad, will work out for our very best (Rom 8:28). It may not look like the best, but looks can deceive us, so even the gruesome circumstances of the Coronavirus are going to work out for the very best for all affected. Some people regard life in this world as a cosmic battlefield and blame the devil for all the suffering and evil we experience (Jindya. 2020). The proper response is not to blame God but rather, to join Him in the battle of the ages against evil, like; fighting abortion, massive killings, and corruption (Pope Francis I, 2019). His thoughts are not our thoughts (Isaiah 55:8-9), for this reason, all men must repent and become converted. Jesus Christ and all the original apostles showed that our receiving eternal life depends on repentance and real conversion (Mark 1:15; Acts 3:19).

### **Religious Approach Towards Prevention of Pandemics such as COVID 19**

Many of the world's faithful have altered long-standing religious practices to avoid the spread of the new coronavirus. The crisis of corona has prompted many religious leaders to appeal to their followers to not only take safety precautions but also to embrace their spirituality to help confront the health, social and economic challenges ahead. Robinson (2020) says, "Religious leaders have regularly offered prayers and words to support their communities. They have sent messages to empower the people of God". The pope said, "Corona is a storm which will end with a prayer to Jesus who saved his disciples" (Pope Francis, 2020). By listening to the words of religious leaders, people can imbibe to what God is telling them. Revelations 9;17-21, John says; “And in my vision, I saw the horses and their riders, they had breastplates, red as fire, blue as sapphire and yellow as Sulphur. The horse's heads were like lions' heads and from their mouths came out smoke and sulfur, third of humanity was killed by those three plagues; the fire, the smoke, and Sulphur coming out of the horses' mouths. For the power of the horses was in their mouths and also their tails. Their tails are like snakes with heads and they use them to hurt people. But for the rest of humanity, all those who had not been killed by these plagues did not turn away from their sins”. They did not stop worshipping demons nor the idols of gold silver, bronze, stone, and wood which cannot see, hear or walk. Nor did they repent of their murders, magic, sexual immorality, and stealing. From this account of revelations, a question that is raised is whether COVID 19 experiences have made people repent their sins or not? In Uganda, during COVID 19 lockdown Monitor (2020) report indicates that there has been an increase in sexual abuse, early marriages/pregnancies, suicide, self-immolation with petrol, domestic violence,

abduction and killing of young children, and an indication that people have not repented and changed their evil ways.

The Pope asked his followers to pray and plead to God to bring an end to this pandemic which he called a storm. In the document *Urbi et orbi*, he alludes to the coronavirus as Jesus' calming the storm. "Corona is a storm which will end with a prayer to Jesus who saved his disciples" (Pope Francis, 2020), therefore, prayer is needed to end COVID 19. The Bible calls upon Christians not to panic amidst diseases such as COVID 19. They are encouraged to take reasonable steps to avoid exposure to diseases, protect and provide for their families as they pray unceasingly.

### **Theoretical Perspective**

This study is guided by the Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned behavior which according to Nisson and Earl (2016) & Hagger (2019) developed out of a theoretical tradition that stipulates that attitudes, subject norms, perceived behavioral control all shape and have an influence on human behaviors. The theory of Reasoned Action was developed by Martin Fishbein & Icek Ajzen in 1975 to determine the differences between attitude and behavior. The theory of reasoned actions assumes that individuals consider their behavior's consequences before performing a particular act. The intention is an important factor in determining behavior and behavioral change. Nisson and Earl (2016) quote Icek Ajzen pointing out that intentions develop from an individual's impression of the way their society perceives the same behavior. Therefore, personal attitudes and social pressure shape intentions which are essential to the performance of behavior and consequently behavioral change. On the other hand, Hagger (2019) is of the view that the theory of planned behavior explains why all people can exert self-control over their behaviors. A key component of the theory of planned behavior is that intentions are influenced by the attitude about the likelihood that the behavior will have expected outcome and subject to evaluation of the risks and benefits of that outcome. An individual's beliefs about the presence of factors may facilitate or hinder the performance of certain behavior. Both theories indicate that behaviors such as the hypocrisy of people who do not act consistently in their families and the public are one example of reasoned and planned behaviors. Hypocrites in society refuse to take responsibility for their actions and they do not mind how their actions impact others. They are not held accountable for their actions because of the nature of the society they live in. In the context of this study, both theories challenge individuals to revisit their behaviors and planned actions that go with it.

Theories of Reasoned Action and Planned behavior challenge people to turn away from self-serving activities, respond to God's call, and repent about those behaviors and actions that hurt humanity. Humanity always blames others for misfortunes, which is reflected in the Mangan (2020) report where he quotes president Trump of the United States, blaming china for having manufactured COVID for selfish motives and now it has hit and hurt the world. Both theories challenge us to revisit our behaviors towards those around us, be committed to personal change, live more responsibly, and humanely. There are many planned actions and behaviors that individuals have engaged in that have caused pain to humanity and therefore require those responsible to change their ways. Biblical teachings challenge individuals to change their behaviors, turn away from sin, change our attitudes, actions and have a relationship with God as reflected in the book of Psalms 119;128, Job 42;5-6, 2corinthians 7;10). In this context, the theories provide us with lessons from COVID 19 so that God can have mercy and stop its spread. In our society, there are incidences where human behavior and actions exhibit greed, selfishness,

corruption, embezzling of donations offered during COVID 19. Human Reliance on materialism, money, fame, power, science, and technology to solve problems needs to change. The current human actions and behaviors exhibited in gay marriages, adultery, promiscuity, corruption, oppression, human sacrifice, abductions, violence, can ignite God's anger to punish people with pandemics. Acting with or without reason, individual or communal plan for evil actions, oppression, and destruction of humanity are the most important concerns raised in this study. Additionally, God calls us to apply reason concerning the implication of our actions and behavior towards others as addressed by both theories. People can change their evil ways and create a world where everyone can live peacefully, justly, and in harmony with neighbors. The reason for the implication of our actions at the individual, family, community, national, and international levels should be paramount when planning to execute our plans in our places of work.

### **Conceptual Perspective**

Coronavirus is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered pathogen. The disease was first reported in December 2019 in Wuhan City in China. The majority of people infected with the COVID-19 virus usually experience respiratory illness, muscle pains and some individuals recover without the aid of any special treatment. Older people and those with medical problems such as HIV/AIDS, cardiovascular infections, diabetes, asthma, cancer, and respiratory diseases are more vulnerable to the disease. COVID 19 spreads through droplets of saliva or discharges from the nose when an infected person coughs or sneezes. Protection measures include wearing masks, handwashing with soap, sanitizers, and social distancing (W.H.O,2020). At the time of conducting this study, there are no specific vaccines or treatments for COVID 19. W.H.O, Christensen&Senthilingam (2020) identify the symptoms of COVID 19 to be fever, respiratory problems, coughing, sore throat, running nose, headache, muscle or joint pains, loss of appetite, diarrhea, vomiting, altered sense of taste, fatigue, and shortness of breath. COVID 19 is a deadly disease that has killed people globally in larger numbers as earlier explained in this study.

Religious Education (RE) is a term given to education concerning the teaching of religion in schools, colleges, and institutions of higher learning. Religious Education is the teaching of a particular religion and its varied beliefs, doctrines, customs, rites, and personal roles. It is a subject offered in universities mostly by students offering education, while those who do not pursue education offer Religious Studies. It is the instruction of faith, spiritual growth, and teaching of morals in schools or colleges. In the context of this study, RE focuses on imparting societal values and spiritual growth aimed at ensuring tolerance and harmonious living. Religious Education as a subject of study aims at ensuring the incorporation of multi-religious and cultural understanding, promoting spiritual growth, and finding out solutions to world challenges of peace, harmonious living, respect for life, development, and human rights. Religious Education classroom teachings and learning environments uphold the principles of other key learning areas where the quality of learning is supported by appropriate pedagogical practices.

Disease according to the Oxford Dictionary, Third Edition (2018), and Burrows (2020) defines disease as an illness that affects a person, animal, or plant. It is a condition that prevents the body or mind from functioning normally. In medical terms or definition, it is an impairment

of the normal state of the living animal or plant body or one of its parts that interrupts the performance of the vital functions which is typically manifested by signs and symptoms and is a response to environmental factors to specific infective agents such as worms, bacteria or virus. It is a disorder, an ailment, a complaint, and a condition that causes trouble or and limitation. In the context of this study coronavirus is an infectious disease which is an ongoing pandemic. A pandemic is a global outbreak of a serious new illness that requires sustained transmission throughout the world. In March 2020, WHO declared coronavirus as a pandemic after the disease was detected in China during December and spread very fast throughout the world (W.H.O,2020). An epidemic is the rapid spread of a disease to a large number of people in a given population within a short period (Wikipedia the Free Encyclopedia,2020).

A plague is a serious bacterial infection that is a deadly and life-threatening disease that requires urgent care. It is a rapidly progressing disease that can lead to death if untreated. Plagues around the world have killed millions of people. Plagues are transmitted from rodents or fleas to human beings (Murrell,2018). In the context of this study, coronavirus was transmitted from bats to human beings in Wuhan, China.

Biblical teachings are anointed teachings from the bible that help the followers of Jesus to understand what God is saying, and thereby apply them in their lives. They are great teachings of the bible meant for Christians. They deal with a variety of truths, unlock prophecy about events, and what God is saying in given circumstances (Alicyn,2014). In the light of this study, biblical teachings reveal what God is saying to us about the coronavirus pandemic, and how we can respond to these teachings in the light of the pandemic.

### **Methodology**

This Case study research design was informed by theories of Reasoned Action and Planned Behavior. A case study is both a method of analysis and search design for examining a problem, both of which can be used to generalize findings across populations (Mills, Durepos & Eiden,2010). The case study was selected because it examines a person, an event, a phenomenon like COVID 19 to gather the required information and to understand the research problem in question. The method was qualitative and was used to investigate the causes and implications of disease epidemics in the context of Religious Education teachings. A random sampling of 3 teaching staff of RE and 14 postgraduate students as participants in the study was picked from Makerere and Kyambogo University. All the students who participated in the study offered Religious Education at the postgraduate level. Among these students, were also priests and pastors attached to some churches and played a big role in interpreting current events concerning biblical teachings. The study was conducted at a time when students were in their homes due to COVID 19 lockdown. For this reason, interviews as a tool for data collection for this qualitative study were conducted using; mobile instant messaging on a WhatsApp forum to enhance self-reporting, zoom through videoconferencing, and direct calls. The researcher first established that each participant had a smartphone and was capable of loading data. In cases where a participant was not capable of loading data, the researcher had to meet this gap. Phone numbers of the participants were availed through student leaders and their lecturers. A WhatsApp forum was created for all participants to ease communication and deliberation, however, network and electricity for charging phones was a problem for some participants who were deep in villages. The Data was analyzed qualitatively.

### **Results**



The major findings of this study are now presented under the following themes; RE Teachers' experiences of coronavirus, implications of lockdown on social life, isolation of victims of coronavirus, human reliance on security, and fraudulent pastors of the modern times

### **Respondents' experiences of coronavirus and lockdown.**

The study established that all participants were of the view that coronavirus started in China in late 2019. It caused fear in Uganda leading to a lockdown that was announced by the Ugandan President Kaguta Yoweri Museveni on 18th March 2019. Findings indicated that many people think COVID 19 is a hoax; that the virus is not there and as such, in a president's televised address to the nation, on the situation of Coronavirus in September, he pointed out that Kampala city is the richest in terms of coronavirus victims because;

*You residents of Kampala don't listen to health tips given to you to prevent the spread of the disease. You don't; were masks, practice social distancing, wash hands with soap and use sanitizers.*

Besides, the study established that most people were of the view that politicians are using the coronavirus situation to serve their self-interests. This disbelief in the existence of coronavirus has led to its increase among the population. Human disbelief is biblical and quite often, God punished Israel for disbelief.

Interviews from various religious leaders and teachers of RE in different institutions revealed that lockdown is a learning experience. It has brought families together more than ever before; it has intensified individual praying, and search for God. On the other hand, it has caused grief, intensified pain, child sacrifice, poverty, famine, domestic violence, stress, fear, and suicide. COVID 19 lockdown measures have caused hunger to many poor families living in precarious situations. The study indicated that lockdown has caused a lot of pain in families, mental anguish leading many family heads to abandon their homes or commit suicide due to failure to provide for the basic needs for their families. Results from interviews further revealed that the majority of the parents who support their children with fees were laid off, businesses collapsed, there was no money to maintain the family and treatment for the sick. Domestic violence in homes, early marriages, and pregnancies of schooling girls increased. Mental health issues increased because churches and areas of socialization such as bars where people interact with friends were closed. One teacher shared his experience of lockdown that embarked on 18th March 2020, due to coronavirus with sobbing tears;

*I teach in a private school where I raise money for tuition, rent, and family upkeep. When schools were closed, salaries were stopped. I had no money for food, rent, and medical bills for our sick child. The landlady demanded payments from the month of May-August, which I could not raise, thus, she threw us out. The stress of lockdown made me look useless before my children, wife, and friends but thank God, when I called my course mate who is a priest, and shared with him what I was going through, he paid for my rent up to March 2021, gave dry food stuffs and money to sustain my children up to when life will become normal. I almost committed suicide but my young daughter's jokes kept me alive and with a smile during the stressful times.*

Although the government took up the responsibility of distributing food to the poor, interviews indicated that the majority of poor people did not get the foodstuffs. Hunger in families forced schooling girls into prostitution, leading to an increase in pregnancies, men, and women to committed suicide. There was no transport to take the sick to hospital, those who defied the curfew regulations and pregnant women who were found being taken to the hospital were brutalized by law enforcement agencies.

The study further established through interviews that many people were of the view that COVID 19 is a punishment from God because communities had become evil and evaded God's commands. God punishing humanity in the same way as depicted in the bible with the coronavirus and lockdown because a lot of evil is going on in society even among religious leaders. Against this background, a religious priest who is also a student of RE concurs with the above narrative that COVID 19 is a punishment from God;

*The world has become too insecure to live in and trust anyone. Human sacrifice is on the increase to the extent that people can sacrifice their children or spouses for the sake of acquiring riches. Human trafficking, slavery, and torture of the victims are reported regularly on social media. Daily reports are awash with an increase in murder, abduction, corruption, gay marriages, scandals among church leaders, political oppression, and dishonesty in marriages. All those vices provoke God's anger to punish humanity with plagues such as coronavirus but God promises to protect the righteous amidst these plagues and pandemics.*

The study also suggests that prime public land that had been grabbed by the rich along the shores of Lake Victoria such as Kigo, Munyonyo, Gaba and Entebbe have been submerged by excessive floods and have been abandoned. To this end, participants contend that there is a need for Christian believers to re-examine their relationship with God and the communities they live in. A call to repentance and addressing the wrongs in society can avert pandemics such as coronavirus, invasion of locusts, and floods.

### **Isolation of Victims of Coronavirus**

The study established that a good segment of the society believe that Coronavirus is a deadly contagious disease, therefore, its victims are treated like lepers mentioned in the bible and they are isolated and quarantined to contain the spread of further infections. Due to the way patients of COVID 19 are treated, many people with symptoms of the pandemic fear to go for treatment for fear of being isolated. An RE teacher shared her experience after presenting symptoms of the virus;

*I got a cough and flu during the COVID lockdown. Family members started avoiding me forcing them to isolate me in one of the rooms outside the house. I decided to go for a medical checkup and boarded a taxi. No sooner had I sat down than I started coughing which made everyone turn back and suspiciously looked at me. Some individuals ordered the conductor to throw me out of the taxi because I was going to infect everyone with coronavirus. Some people got out of the taxi in protest. I felt so bad, rejected, and asked myself why God brought this curse of the*

*corona. Fortunately, medical results indicated that I had no coronavirus. I was treated like a leper as depicted in the bible.*

The revelations of the study indicated that health guidelines to prevent coronavirus from spreading included self-isolation if one is sick or suspects to be infected with the virus. It was found out from interviews that when people are forced into isolation due to the pandemic, they feel traumatized, experience increased anxiety, depression, neglect, feel like outcasts, are abused and encounter barriers in accessing support. One teacher of RE raised her voice regarding rich people and those in positions of leadership who had neglected the hospitals in this country because they thought they were for the poor;

*You rich, government officials, and politicians who seek medical treatment outside Uganda, it's your turn to suffer like ordinary people you had marginalized and despised.*

Findings from this study further suggest that the rich were forced by the pandemic to run to the local hospitals they once despised because, before coronavirus lockdown, the government would spend funds on them and be airlifted or to be treated abroad in sophisticated hospitals. Rich peoples also shopped in big supermarkets with show off and would be escorted to their cars with their items by supermarket attendants. But, since the majority of them could not drive to supermarkets after public transport was a banned, they started walking with their heads down to local shops of the peasants for shopping. Other rich people migrated to their upcountry homes which they had abandoned to live among villagers whom they look down upon as ignorant, dirty, backward, malnourished, and diseased people. These findings are echoed throughout the book of prophet Amos. One lecturer of Religious Education observed that;

*COVID has brought people closer to God, many people are becoming more devoted faithfuls, it has reduced superpowers to nothing, exposed dictators, brought families together and parents closer to their children. The wealthy and working-class couples who were not used to spending a lot of time together are now in trouble. Couples that have been avoiding each other are now spending time together under lockdown. COVID 19 is going to destroy their marriages because they are not built on the solid foundation of love, faithfulness and honesty. Domestic violence is going to be on the increase.*

This study reveals that the closing of churches intensified domestic violence, increased stress, and anxiety in families. Although prayers are conducted online, counseling services for individual families have reduced leading to domestic violence and related evils. To this end, it needs to be noted that the family is one of the most important gifts that God gave humanity. When family life is anchored on strong Christian values of faithfulness, love, forgiveness, and kindness, storms like COVID 19 are rendered useless. Jesus can calm any storm for those who trust in Him. COVID 19 is a mere agent of Satan to test the faith of God's people.

### **Reliance on Human security other than God**

Data generated from interviews with RE teachers, reveals that people around the world have created security walls around themselves against threats or dangers. In the public sphere, people are exposed to security checks in big government offices, airports, and homes to reduce criminal activities and threats of terrorism. In times of abundance, people tend to forget God and concentrate on the accumulation of wealth and power. They create an illusion that they are in

control of everything and can create their security without reliance on God. In times of abundance, people tend to forget God and the reality that surrounds sin., but when suffering and calamities like coronavirus hit and exposes human weakness, the things people cherish and rely on cannot save them. One of the interviewees had this to say;

*We surround ourselves with long perimeter walls, lock ourselves in strong gates installed with cameras, install antivirus software and use secure passwords online to protect our devices and personal data to avoid malware and identity theft but COVID 19 has trashed all these as useless.*

This study suggests that governments such as the United States, Russia, Britain, North Korea, and China invest hundreds of billions of dollars per year on internal and external security. Yet, with their formidable military forces and sophisticated surveillance systems they cannot detect, detain, or disarm the invisible threat of COVID 19. For this pandemic to hit superpowers more than the rest of the third world countries, shows that God is the only superpower. Human beings had chosen to rely on their intellect through technological and scientific innovations other than on God. Technology has provided powerful new tools for fighting diseases and for reducing the ecological footprints of industries but these advanced nations could not stop the havoc caused by COVID 19 on the human race. This implies that the application of human efforts to manage technological advancement is not sufficient enough to address all human problems. Technology has also promoted gaps between the haves and the have nots, thus, enhancing discrimination and inequality in society. An RE teacher who preferred anonymity shared his views on sinful issues that can prompt God to punish humanity with COVID 19;

*COVID 19 is killing people but the scale and consequences of the pandemic are man-made, people are sinful and are reaping from their very sins because they have not learned much from the pandemic. The thousands of lives lost and the millions of livelihoods that have been destroyed were not inevitable because of the extreme inequality that is perpetuated in technological advancement and the global economy. The steepness of the mortality curves, the depth of the economic losses, and the social upheavals in different countries are the consequences of man-made policy choices, a function of the economic model that leaders have created. COVID 19 has pushed the world into recession through the imposition of great lockdowns. Corona has created a food crisis, if people don't die of the corona, they will die of hunger. The marginalized people most of who are women are walking long distances to find what to eat, while the rich are in enclosed homes and utilize delivery services to drop all their requirements conveniently.*

In addition to this study, it was revealed that people need to invest in things that can sustain them through tribulations and suffering. Spiritual nourishment based on biblical teachings is a paramount need to carry one through the storm. Stories of teachers and people committing suicide during COVID 19 lockdown because of stress, poverty, and pain of redundancy was quite shocking. Resilience and reliance on God in times of fear and anxiety can be vehicles for sailing through the storm. Another RE teacher raised a serious issue that the world is too sinful which unleashed God's wrath as she expressed her views;



*Developed countries with their technological advancement embrace homosexuality/ lesbianism as normal which can lead to God's anger. Take for example recent reports on social media of February 2020 where a South African Anglican gay tied the knot with another Kenyan pastor in a colorful wedding attended by jubilant Christian congregations. Such activities are the ones that have caused God's wrath upon humanity. The book of Genesis shows that Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire because of homosexuality. Related human sinful acts prompted God to inflict COVID 19 on humanity.*

The study findings further indicated that in most developed countries, the majority of the people rely on their human knowledge rather than God. Computers, robots, and high technology machines have replaced man's imperfect hand in dispensing medicine and surgery. Reports from RE teachers' interviews revealed that the world has put its trust in science and technology as they seemed to answer all man's problems, but today COVID 19 has closed all the airports, countries are in lockdown, hospitals can't help the people dying in large numbers in USA, Europe, China, Ecuador, etc, churches are closed and have been turned into mortuaries for the dead as in Spain and Italy. Science, technological innovations, and education cannot solve the current COVID 19 problems that have locked down the whole world.

### **Fraudulent Pastors of the Modern Times**

The study also found that the majority of preachers in Pentecostal churches have been claiming to have powers to make miracles and healing the sick but COVID 19 has proved them to have limited powers. Only God has the power and final say to heal pandemics such as COVID 19. In our Ugandan society, neither religious priests nor miracle workers and witches have claimed to heal coronavirus victims. One of the RE students quoted a pastor from Pentecostal churches of Arising for Christ ministries, contends that COVID 19 has exposed his fellow pastors whom he referred to as fraudsters that preach the gospel to extort money from followers when he said;

*Fraudulent preachers who claim to have supernatural powers to offer financial blessings, physical wellbeing, and healing among their folk in exchange for material benefits are now tongue-tied. Most of the miracles performed in churches are stage-managed. I challenge any pastor or prophet who claims to be with healing powers to pitch camp at Entebbe General Hospital and heal the COVID 19 victims and those suffering from the same pandemic in other parts of the world. COVID 19 is the real litmus test and an eye-opener to Christian faithful to reflect on how Pentecostal pastors have been stealing from them in the name of God.*

This revelation arising from attempts of pastors to heal the faithful from the COVID 19 pandemic calls Christians to keep a distance from fake preachers who exhort money from them in the name of seeding offering for a miracle, healing, and riches. In the same vein, another Religious Education teacher who preferred anonymity said;

*People have lost respect for God before COVID 19 has ended and we are still grappling with its negative consequences. Imagine those people who dared to*

*demolish to the ground Kibuye Church of Uganda, the recently built Anglican church which Christians had just completed using their hardly earned cash. These are some of the issues that are inviting God's wrath upon us. President Museveni visiting the same place where the church was pulled down by a businessman in favor of an arcade, said that destroying a church of God is a curse.*

Another teacher of RE shared his views on how strange things are happening in Uganda during the prolonged lockdown of some institutions like churches and schools he had this to say;

*Just in September 2020; a man carried a human head of a five-year-old child to Uganda parliament as a gift for the speaker, Hon. Kadaga; 219 inmates in Moroto broke the prison and disappeared with guns; a young man hit his friend with a hoe to death having invited him to read a bible with him; Makerere University main building, parliament bus caught fire, Katwe police station, and the Electoral commission bus caught fire in a series of weeks, a member of parliament and minister tried to shoot voters in Ntungamo district; all COVID 19 funds which were raised during the lockdown were stolen; 18 billion shillings meant to rescue private teachers in terms of loans was stolen; corruption, imprisoning, killing and beating people ruthlessly during National Resistance election Primaries.*

The issues generated above raise many questions. What is God saying to us through these strange happenings? Are religious leaders interpreting these occurrences in the light of God's message to humanity? Why are child sacrifices on the increase, and why are perpetrators not heavily punished? Children are a gift from God and their abuse can lead to pandemics such as COVID 19. From a religious perspective, the only way to prevent this global pandemic is through conversion or repentance by the population. As Christians or believers, we need to live upright lives and avoid the tendency of evil. But due to our human limitations, we commit sins: so, there is a need to seek conversion and forgiveness from the Almighty.

It is time to keep our heads up and respond calmly in the face of something that threatens our lives. Let us not forget the good shepherd Jesus Christ. God permits evil but He does not allow it to defeat us. He permits it only to bring greater good out of it so that we will think about how we are living our lives. This is done so that we turn back from sin and turn towards Him with prayer and confessions in our homes when we face up to the fact that we often break His commandments. This crisis is a wake-up call from God to get back onto the right track again, the track that leads to Him. We should remove the injustices and oppression of those in our care and the wider society.

## **Discussion**

Study findings indicated that the majority people are aware of the coronavirus pandemic, although, many called it a hoax which political leaders wanted to use to achieve their selfish ends. Teachers of Religious Education who were interviewed were of the view that coronavirus is a punishment from God because of high levels of greed, materialism, competition, the desire for power, and the wish to advance oneself in the society which are primary reasons for

corruption. Corruption typically flourishes in societies in which there is a high value placed on money, power, and materialism in life. Effects of corruption might include instability, distrust, injustices in society, murder, human sacrifice, abduction, and people turning away from God to respect humanity, which may have triggered God's anger to pass judgment on the disobedient populations. The theories of reasoned action and planned behavior challenge humanity to turn away from their sin, change their behavior and negative attitudes that promote indifferences and selfishness.

As earlier explained in this study, people who were interviewed recalled the events depicted in the book of Exodus 7:14ff up to the 11th chapter of that book tells us about the 10 plagues that the Lord God sent to Pharaoh. The plagues came because of Pharaoh's disbelief and disobedience when Moses and Aaron his brother went to seek freedom of the Israelites from Egypt, as Yahweh had demanded. Several signs and wonders were performed before Pharaoh, but none of these was sufficient for Pharaoh believe for him to free Israelites from slavery until the 10th plague Ex 12:29 when the Lord slew every 1st born in the land of Egypt that he permitted Moses, Aaron, and Israelites to leave the Egyptian Land with their animals as they had requested. To this end, as in theory of reasoned action and planned behavior, Pharaoh had to change his mind to let the people go, which also calls humanity to bring justice to those who are oppressed.

Besides, these findings indicated the Pharaoh's rigidity to hid God's command as is depicted in many people's hearts in this era of coronavirus. The contemporary world always shows threats against nature. One person who was interviewed used an example of the institution of marriage that was blessed in the gospel of Matthew 19: 6-12. Today marriage of the same sex, homosexuality, and lesbianism are treated and respected as gospel truths. Technology and science are also other 21st century developments that are taken as holistic truth. The Lord God always brings out signs and wonders to humanity as he did to Pharaoh through teachers, pastors, sheiks, theologians, priests, and bishops but humanity still show love for more signs and wonders to turn to reality

Several participants in the study contended that COVID 19 pandemic is an event that is God sent to confront the 21st-century man to change heart as it was in the book of Exodus chapter 7 when Pharaoh had to change his heart to allow the will of God to be revealed. COVID 19, therefore, calls us to change heart, to always allow the will of God to be done in us, to live in line with natural law. To change all the funny styles of living like same-sex marriage, homosexuality, lesbianism, destruction of the environment, and taking technology as the entire truth among others. Concisely, COVID might be a sign that reminds us to live by nature.

In the context of theories of reasoned action and planned behaviors, COVID 19 reminds us that we are fully dependents on the creator, God almighty. In this 21st century, there is too much secularism especially on the side of the white man. The man of the 21st century observes that through science many things are possible even without intercession from God, for instance, complicated surgeries are done, rockets fly in space, the internet making the world a global village et cetera. The ability to tame nature seems to make a man of this century a superstar. COVID 19, therefore, tells us to turn to God who fights for all humanity in all situations, just as it was in Ex 14:14 when Moses convinced the Israelites to stand firm, for the Lord himself was to fight for them. Ex 14: 22 explains how the Israelites marched through the Red sea on the dry

belt, with the water standing like a wall to their right and their left. COVID 19 retells us to stop secularism, and urges us to turn to the living God, for he makes the impossible possible. If a disease can cause important activities like public prayers, school activities to stop, it indicates to us that human knowledge is limited; we should turn to God so that he can do the impossible for us.

Findings from the study also reveal that various teachers of RE, preachers of the gospel, and lay Christians hold the view that the purpose OF COVID 19 is to call the sinful to repentance. Some participants argued that COVID 19 is meant to fulfill Jesus' teachings that God will allow escalation of all kinds of calamities eg plagues, natural disasters, and disease epidemics to bring humanity to Himself through repentance. But the question raised by the majority of people who were interviewed was; Has humanity learned anything from COVID 19 that can bring them to repentance? In line with this narrative, Barrier (2020) urges that whereas God is using Coronavirus to call us back to himself, Christian believers should not panic, or let anyone mislead them about the coming of the messiah but should instead be on the lookout and pray constantly, be hopeful, remove oppression, have mercy on those who afflicted and continue to be witnesses for Christ during and out of pandemics. Basing on evidence deduced from biblical teachings, Barrier (2020) outlines seven reasons why God sends diseases and troubles to humanity;

- (1) To accomplish His purpose as portrayed in Exodus 9;8-11, where God used plagues to deliver Israel from bondage in Egypt; Revelations 9;15-19 God used fire and smoke to kill humanity, but even those who were not consumed by fire and smoke did not repent;
- (2) To teach obedience as in Deuteronomy 28 where God promises wealth and prosperity for those who obey his command and plagues for the disobedient;
- (3) To oppose pride as in 2Samuel 24;13, where God punished king David for taking a census of the army leading to three years of famine, three months of defeat from enemies, and three days of the plague;
- (4) To stop idolatry as expressed in Exodus 20;3 that God hates idolatry and Ezekiel 7 talks about the destruction of the Jewish economy that thrived on idol worship;
- (5) To teach about being grateful as seen in Numbers 11;31-33 where the Israelites demanded meat but were sent quills instead and were also punished with a poisonous plague for complaining to Moses about Manna because of their ungratefulness;
- (6) To defend His promises which are expressed in 1Samuel 5;6, where the Philistines captured the Ark of the covenant and sent it to Ashdod instead of returning it to Israel. God punished them with a plague of rats and hemorrhoids to teach them a lesson about His Holiness and the Holy people of Israel chosen by God as a unique race;
- (7) To reveal His power as in the book of Job where God permitted Satan to inflict diseases on His servant Job so that He could reveal His power to His faithful servant. 2Chronicles 7;14 calls Christians to pray together in all circumstances and to take refuge in God as expressed in Psalm 91;2-14.

The study findings indicate that the time of COVID 19 lockdown was a time of silence, isolation, reflection, and response to God's call and what he wants Christians to learn from the pandemic. Victims and those who came in contact with COVID patients were isolated as a measure to contain the virus, while others went in for self-isolation. W.H.O (2020) encourages social distancing and avoiding public gatherings. In support of this study Arabi (2020) calls on people



to develop empathy, kindness, mercy, and reach out to those affected by COVID 19. Similarly, Alcorn (2020) quotes Martin Luther King, when confronted with the plague of 1527 saying, "By God's decree the enemy has sent a pestilence but I shall plead to the merciful God to protect us. Then I shall administer medicine and take it if I am sick, I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus, perchance be infected and pollute others. If people in a city were to show themselves bold in faith, when a neighbors' needs and demands are met, and if everyone would help ward off contagion as best as he/she can, then the death toll caused by the pandemic would be moderate. But if some people are too foolish and panicky, desert their neighbors in their plight and if some are too foolish not to take precaution, but aggravate the contagion, the devil has a heyday and many will die". Similarly, Isaiah 26;20 indicates that the lockdown that has hit the world is biblical and people should abide by the COVID regulations. Christians are also reminded to follow government and medical advice regarding the pandemic to drastically reduce infections. Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) quote Proverbs 27;12 which says that prudence sees danger and hides, but the simple go on and suffer. This passage is warning Christians to take precautions and follow all the guidelines that prevent them from getting infected with coronavirus which among others includes social distancing, avoiding public gathering, wearing a mask, handwashing with soap, and application of sanitizer at all times. On the other hand, Harris (2020) points out that COVID 19 and other pandemics should remind Christians that the world is not our home, and death is as much part of life as birth.

From a different perspective, Lewis (2020) assures Christians basing on the biblical teachings from Romans 8;38-39 that; "Neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor anything else in all creation including coronavirus will be able to separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ our Lord". Isaiah 41;10 records God's declaration and affirmation for Christians, "Fear not for I am with you, be not dismayed, for I am Your God, I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. In times of pandemics like coronavirus, God is our strength, He will uphold us with His righteous hand and He will not desert us with all Christians throughout the world as stated in 2Corinthians 1;3. In the same vein, Pope Francis (2020) has called on the leaders of all the Christian churches, communities, and confessions worldwide, not to lose hope in the face of COVID 19 but to join together in prayer and plead to God to rid the world of the coronavirus, corruption, homosexuality; abortion, wars and other pandemic diseases that are wreaking havoc everywhere. Biblical teachings also call upon Christians to be emphatic and meet the needs of those in pain and distress.

It also emerged that from the perspectives of biblical teachings on the causes of diseases and plagues, COVID 19 requires repenting our sins and making a return to God. Besides, Alcorn (2020), asserts that based on the biblical teachings in Hebrews 12, God is using Coronavirus and other calamities such as earthquakes, floods, and locusts to discipline humanity. A corroborative report by Mbabazi (2020) indicates that the President of Uganda, HE Yoweri Kaguta Museveni declared 29th August 2020 a National Day of Prayer and public holiday to mitigate the effects of COVID 19 on humanity. All Ugandans were called upon by the president to stay in their houses or compounds, repent their sins, and cry or supplicate to God to heal Uganda of COVID 19.

The study suggests that there is a high level of moral degeneration that is positively related to the increase in human sacrifice can ignite God to punishing humanity with pandemics such as

coronavirus. This is exemplified by a scenario in which, a 22 aged young man from Kizinda, Ishaka Municipality, Bushenyi, was intercepted at the Uganda parliament with a severed human head of a child which he said, he wanted to deliver to the speaker of the parliament as a gift. In Uganda, child sacrifice is on the increase and they are often targeted by evil people. In the same context, in 2Kings 3;27, the King of Moab sacrificed his son who was his heir as a burnt offering on the wall which caused great wrath against Israel. Prophet Ezekiel 20;26, 20;31, 16;20-21 and Jeremiah 19; 4-5, condemn child sacrifice because it an abominable thing before God and causes God's wrath upon those who practice it.

Palm (2020) points out that like COVID 19, decades ago, people with leprosy in various parts of the world such as the USA were isolated and confined on an Island or a hospital. The fear of being isolated in a lonely place led patients with infectious diseases to avoid seeking treatment and would hide the disease. In a different but related incidence, Eckert (2020) likened COVID 19 to the angel of death for disobedience which is a description of the plague that killed first-born children of Egyptian families while sparing those of the Israelites. Naughtie (2020) quoted an evangelical pastor, Ralph Drollinger, saying that ungodly acts such as promiscuity, lesbianism, homosexuality and same sex marriages caused God's Wrath to punish humanity with COVID 19. The pastor stressed that God was punishing Americans for indulging in unnatural acts which violates biblical precepts of godly behavior. COVID is killing people in big numbers because American people disobeyed God's laws. Other abominable acts that people indulge in that raised God's wrath to punish humanity with COVID 19 included human beings having sex with animals such as dogs, goats, and donkeys.

Jeremiah 7 warned people who attended temple service but were corrupt, committed adultery, murdered innocent people, were liars, practiced idolatry, yet they gave heavy offertories and fulfilled all temple requirements. The temple of Jeremiah's time had become a hiding place for evildoers. Against this background, God would drive them out of the temple and they would face destruction. In the same vein, Aluma (2020) points out that to prevent the spread of COVID 19 pandemic, church congregations were banned to minimize the spread of the virus. The banning of religious congregations isolated people at a time when they needed the voice of God in times of insecurity need for food, money, and people to lean on due to stress during the lockdown. In televised messages religious leaders have calmed the fears, panicking of their flocks and called upon them to repent and return to God who has the power to heal the situation of the pandemic. Relatedly, Barrier (2020) quotes Psalms 91;2-14 where God promises to protect His people amidst troubles, illnesses, and pandemics such as COVID 19. Even when millions of people perish because of the coronavirus, the righteous shall live because God's hand is upon them.

The study established that the majority of RE teachers believe that COVID 19 is here to teach us that any time the world can come to an end. It was just an abrupt lockdown and quarantine, schools, churches, public gatherings, bars, weddings, funerals, saloons, flights, baptisms and confirmations, were all closed without a warning. The question that came out for many people was how to survive during the lockdown. The lockdown caused by coronavirus does not segregate, it hit the poor and the rich with equal measure and that the things are treasured such as money, professions, business, and property all disappeared in thin air. Complimenting this

finding, Oden (2020) identifies eight lessons which Christians should learn from COVID 19, quarantine and lockdown. These are;

(1) The global crisis caused by COVID 19 indicates that humanity is weak and fragile. Money, materialism, technology, and science are not the answers to human problems. Oden (2020) quotes Psalms 103;15-16 which says; "As for us, our life is like grass. We grow and flourish like a wildflower, then wind (coronavirus) blows on it and it is gone and no one sees it again. "While Psalms 90;12 teaches us to number our days".

(2) Coronavirus has shown that all humanity is equal, the infection from the virus cuts across all boundaries of race, language, culture, color, economic, political, and religious strata. Amidst the fear, isolation, pain, and death caused by COVID 19, all human race is equal which is the original intention of God.

(3) Coronavirus has shown that as human beings, we have limitations to control ourselves, destiny, money, property, science, and technology. Humanity could not control the virus that started in China to eventually spread globally. Even when there were lockdown and quarantine, the virus continued to spread.

(4) The psychological pain one experiences when isolated due to suspicion of coronavirus, is not different from being treated like a leper and is not an easy thing to contend with, yet many people infected with and suspects of COVID 19 have to be isolated from the rest of the community. In Leviticus 13;45 and as earlier discussed in this study, a person with a dreadful disease was forced to wear torn clothes, leave his/her hair uncombed, cover the lower part of his/her face and call out, "Unclean, Unclean" and had to leave outside the camp as long as he/she still had the disease. In the case of coronavirus, if one is identified as a victim, the entire family is isolated and even mistreated by neighbors because they are seen as outcasts and dangerous people to society. In some societies, victims of the virus are killed by their communities before they can even access treatment.

(5) Coronavirus has caused fear and panic at the individual, family, community, national, regional, and global levels. But the good news for Christians is that Jesus is in control and will guide his followers through the storm of COVID 19 and other related pandemics and challenges of life.

(6) COVID 19 has put humanity in a situation that calls for the need for God's intervention for people to pray unceasingly for infected individuals, families, homes, affected communities, and governments. Pray for those who are in quarantines, those afraid of leaving in their homes, those who go outside their homes to get what to eat, and are at higher risk of getting infected. Pray for those who are losing their loved due to COVID 19 and other diseases. We also need to pray for medical personal that risk their lives to treat those infected with the virus. Pray that Jesus takes control over the situation of COVID 19 so that the pain and anxiety caused by the pandemic comes to pass.

(7) Corona 19 pandemic confirms the teachings depicted in Ecclesiastics 12 that everything people cherish and cling to in this world is vanity. Chasing the things of the world is like chasing the wind.

(8) In times of pandemics and other challenging situations, God remains our hope. This is highlighted in John 11;25-26 in which He says, "I am the resurrection and the life, whoever believes in me will live, even though they die, they will have eternal life again.

Whitmel (2020) calls upon Christians to pray as they walk in the storm of coronavirus, proclaim Jesus' love, and meet the needs of the poor neighbors. Orfund (2020) acknowledges that days of coronavirus are strange days filled with fear, hysteria, anxiety, and pain. The old testament speaks of people who are subjected to pandemics and these experiences are relevant for our communities experiencing the coronavirus pandemic. In times of panic, prophets and Jesus call upon Christians to trust and believe in God for care and provision. Alcorn (2020) affirms that God has sovereignty over corona and He is the God of providence at all times and situations as he raised Esther (Esther 4;14) in times of crisis.

This study upholds the biblical teachings in Exodus 20;3, that God hates the idolatry of our times which revolves around power, money, and possession of the property. In line with this, Kiwawulo (2020) reported an incident of greed that led a businessman to destroy a newly built magnificent church of Uganda in Ndeeba during the COVID 19 lockdown. Ezekiel 7 prophesied the destruction of the Jewish economy and called the people of Israel to put away the idols they cherished. Against this background, the church calls Christians to be kind to others because the world is dealing with three Pandemics which are Greed, Corruption, and the Coronavirus." People should not only focus on materialism but endeavor to be obedient to God, serving his will and people diligently. In the same vein, Alcorn (2020) quotes Mathew 6 that challenges Christians to store up their treasures in heaven not the earth, considering the massive wealth people have lost during coronavirus lockdown, high levels of financial uncertainty, and collapse in business. Stetzer and MacDonald (2020) urge Christians, not to panic because coronavirus is teaching us to plan well and wisely for the future and times of pandemics, seek expertise, seek clarity, not impulsivity that is engulfed with fear, be hopeful during times of epidemics, seek mission, not isolation, meet the needs of the vulnerable populations that are hit by the coronavirus pandemic and be ready to pay a cost in terms of sharing resources and treating those who are sick. In times of coronavirus Christians are encouraged upon to seek Jesus Christ because according to Mark 4;41, even the winds listen to Him. While Hebrews 13;8 says Jesus is the same, today and forever, so neither Satan nor sickness nor sabotage nor coronavirus is stronger than Jesus. The study established that the majority of the vulnerable people were affected by the nationwide lockdown leading them to experience scarcity of food and other basic needs of life. This food distribution was not equitably done, and a large proportion of the poor was left out. This is supported by in Acts 6;1-7 when the number of believers increased, people's attention was diverted from embracing the word of God because of simple things such as distributing food to the widows. It was decided by the church to select seven men of good reputation, filled with the Spirit and wisdom to perform this function. Additionally, the study noted that coronavirus and lockdown led to increased unemployment, loss of social networks, layoffs, mental health problems, the shame of being unemployed, loneliness, loss of income for those in the informal sector, the stress associated with financial insecurity, and loss of job or collapse of the business. A similar study conducted in Scotland by the Mental Health Foundation (2020) found out that COVID 19 pandemic, lockdown, and associated measures had intensified financial inequalities and mental illness among people. There was also increased unemployment which was associated with poverty, loss of jobs, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, stress, and financial insecurity.

The study found out that prayers were organized by individuals, pastors, social media, and at the national level supplicate to God to remove COVID 19 from Uganda and the entire



world. Similarly, Reid (2020) acknowledges that World Vision organized special prayers for; people who were affected by a coronavirus, the virus to stop spreading, the medical professionals, caregivers, and researchers who sacrificed their lives to treat those infected with the pandemic, people who were at higher risk of contracting the disease, leaders who are responsible for making coronavirus decisions, families of the vulnerable who are adjusting to new ways of life caused by the pandemic, businesses owners and families facing financial stress, grocery store workers and delivery drivers and people to get opportunities to survive during COVID 19. In addition, the biblical teachings that emphasize, prayers and dedications to God, people also need to turn away from their evil ways, repent and remove the yoke of injustices as raised in Isaiah 58.

## Conclusion

The coronavirus pandemic has changed our world and our thinking. The things that were deemed important to us (wealth, power, prestige, soccer leagues (worldwide), parades, parties, etc.) are nothing in comparison to the pain coronavirus inflicts and its threats to human life. God is using these serious times to draw humanity to Himself and Christ. The closure of the churches and lockdown and the call for prayers at our closed doors represent the foundation of the beginning of the church, where Christians were only allowed to pray in their homes. The value for the family stepping from the love of God is emanating again through family prayers and togetherness during the lockdown. God is showing the love and unity of everyone. God desires that none should perish and that all should put their trust in Christ. In Psalm 91: 10, God assures the believers that neither disease nor violence will strike them even during times such as those of COVID 19. The world continues its life and it is beautiful, although it has ushered into humanity, a host of new challenges never experienced before. During this COVID 19 Christians are challenged to depend on God and trust him to address the pandemic and other related issues that afflict humanity with pain. People should also revise how they are relating to one another. Since the disease is spread through contact with the infected person, the law of love of the neighbor should during this particular period rule out contact, but there should be individual help. Helping one another by giving the little one can offer to the friend. People should know that God is in control of everything. Though developed countries have scientists, they have failed to control the massive deaths of people, therefore, God should be given his honor and respect. COVID 19 is a deadly disease and it depicts some aspects which show that God demands that people turn away from their evil ways. Change in the way of life should go hand in hand with prayer and following what political, religious, and other leaders are telling people to do. Besides, we are to acknowledge and accept our human limitations (power, knowledge, and others) and become believers in God. This will help in reducing our human pride and arrogance to allow God to take control. Christians who have sickness with symptoms such as COVID 19 should isolate themselves from the public. Christians should emulate people of biblical times, where people with incurable diseases were isolated, and while those who were not sick kept a distance from the infected.

COVID 19 teaches us the qualities of endurance and perseverance as it was for Job in the Bible. Through prayer, God will always save us. We should not insult God in this challenging time, God is just testing us to see whether we know that there exists a divine that is powerful and greater than our shortcomings. Let us see the way Job suffered, God tested him and he kept hope until he prospered again. People including his wife advised him to curse God and die Job 2:9 but

he moved on to his general principle that everything comes from God (Job 1:21). All this came because of the loss of Job's belongings including his sons and daughters. No matter how much we have suffered, we have a big God who protects us. Christian believers of the 21st century have to persevere and endure until the end. Those challenges of life always come and go but then we have to be hopeful.

We often plan without checking for the divine will. COVID 19 has taught us to always leave a gap for God to act as we plan. Some of us thought that we were well off, hence, using our fellow beings as a means to achieve our ends. During this troublesome time, we have seen town people (the so-called well off) lose their jobs, the village people (the so-called people of low status) have fed them. As we wait for the will of God to be done, we should treat one another like a brother. A reflection on Lazarus, a poor man on earth and a rich man (Luke 16:16) should teach us how to treat the vulnerable.

Experiences of COVID 19 allow humanity to prioritize things in our lives, change the way we think about ourselves and do things. God wishes humanity to be like him, be for others, and meet their needs. In St. Paul's letter to the Philippians 3:20, Paul testifies that Christians' citizenship is in heaven, he continues in Philippians 3:21 that the Lord will change our lowly body to conform with his glorified body by the power that enables him to bring all things into subjection to himself. It is on that accord therefore that God always destroys evil in the world. Isaiah 26:21, tells us that the Lord goes forth from his plan to punish the wickedness of the earth's inhabitants. COVID 19 may be a way to punish evil that exist in the modern world. Coronavirus has changed our world; the way of approaching the world, work, thinking hopes, and priorities. We are now in a new world that no longer trusts technology, superpowers, money, and materialism to answer questions about our existence and the challenges of life. We have to accept God to drive our lives

### **Recommendations**

- (i) Religious leaders should interpret the current events based on biblical teachings to know what God is saying to us;
- (ii) Call people to repentance to avert situations such as this one caused by coronavirus; Religious leaders and teachers should warn people from believing in people who call coronavirus a hoax and political game to keep people in power;
- (iii). Christians should extend a helping hand to vulnerable communities because this is a biblical command
- (iv) Pray constantly for the hand of God to remove coronavirus and other related strange things that affect human peace.

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