

Gateway would like to offer some principles and guidance about the topic of COVID-19. Everybody has an opinion about it, and it has been very thought provoking for all of us.

Here are our guiding biblical principles:

- Romans 13 (and other passages in the New Testament) clearly exhort Christians “to be subject to the governing authorities” (Rom 13:1 – ESV).
- Starting with Leviticus 19:18 and Jesus in Mark 12:28-31, we are to consider others more significant than ourselves (Phil 2:1-4,)
- Romans 13 (and 1Peter 2:13-17) is government authority that is set up (established) by God to do good and reward those who do good. Jesus opposed the Temple authority and the early Christians said “We must obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:29) when the ruling powers are not doing the right thing.
- There is a vital balance between serving others and being responsible for one’s own life (Galatians 6:2 and 6:5).
- There is a strong emphasis in Scripture on mutual love and respect of one-another in God’s church (Ephesians 4:1-16)
- In the history of the Baptist church, there has always been the distinctive of freedom for each person to search the scriptures and one’s own heart and come to one’s own personal decision regarding most matters (except the fundamentals of the Faith).

The principles and responses from leadership are as follows:

- We want to continue to encourage people to search the scriptures and develop one’s personal conviction in matters like this. This includes moral, spiritual, and ethical considerations. We then would have to live with the implications of the decisions that we personally make.
- We believe also that there must be a love and respect for people’s personal choices, as mentioned above.
- We also want to encourage people to research the validity and expertise of their own health advice and its source. Leadership don’t feel qualified to speak on these health matters –we will not be seen to be giving medical advice. There seems to be genuine reasons that some people with health conditions are advised not to receive the vaccine by their own doctor; it would be unwise to tell them anything else.
- Leadership is conscious that this topic has the potential to divide Christians and has done so already. We must resist the urge to fracture and continually point people to Jesus and the Kingdom and remain united in faith.
- If any government authority stops us from living out our faith, we will seriously consider and peacefully protested against it. The point that ‘we must obey

God rather than men' (Acts 5:29) still is true today. We don't believe masks, QR codes or vaccine will stop us from living out our faith. Hopefully, not ever!

- There is a view amongst leadership that this is not the 'Mark of the Beast', however it is another 'pre-cursor' to the end times.
- There is a belief that vaccines should not be mandated as such, so as to exclude and include people. We recognise in some industries/workplaces that mandatory vaccines are already taking place and people's convictions are starting to be tested. This has not 'cut against' the church's freedom to meet together.
- We don't feel to take a formal church position on this issue other than already outlined above.
- We must all continue to trust God, whichever position one takes.
- In whatever the government decides, everyone (vaccinated or non-vaccinated) will be welcome to worship at Gateway.