

Bill Kaplan: Christian religious leaders urge vaccinations

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A new study (Commonwealth Fund) highlighted the consequences of not getting a COVID-19 full vaccination (2 shots) and booster: “Even if omicron causes less severe disease than earlier variants, the explosive spread of infections threatens to drive hospitalizations and deaths to unprecedentedly high levels, swamping already overburdened hospitals and health care workers. Hospitalizations are occurring mostly among the unvaccinated but also among people whose immunity from primary vaccination (2 shots) or previous infection has waned.”

Same in Wisconsin as the omicron surge has spread throughout the state. The numbers are horrifying: 1,139,933+ cases, 10,486+ deaths, record hospitalizations and an explosion of COVID infections among children. The unvaccinated have been hit very hard. The Wisconsin Department of Health Services said unvaccinated Wisconsinites are three times more likely to get COVID-19, ten times more likely to be hospitalized and fourteen times more likely to die than the vaccinated (2 shots).

To control and limit variants the unvaccinated need to get 2 shots and a booster; the vaccinated need to get a booster. The Commonwealth Fund said: “Boosters reinforce the wall of immunity built by previous vaccination and prior infection. Boosters appear to be highly effective at preventing severe illness and hospitalization. ... Tripling the daily rate (of boosters) to 2.3 million per day could prevent (nationally) more than 63,000 deaths and nearly 600,000 hospitalizations, while preventing more than 21 million infections.”

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Christian religious leaders grasp science and strongly urge vaccinations. Pope Francis said: “Getting the vaccines that are authorized by the respective authorities is an act of love. ... Getting vaccinated is a simple yet profound way to care for one another” He recently condemned “baseless information or poorly documented facts” that promote vaccine hesitancy. The Pope emphasized: “It is therefore important to continue the effort to immunize the general population as much as possible.” The Catholic Bishops of Wisconsin have also urged the faithful “to receive the COVID-19 vaccine ... because it is the most effective way to combat this virus.”

Russell Moore and Walter Kim, National Association of Evangelicals, said: “Evangelicals should fight conspiracy theories and welcome the vaccines These conspiracy theories ... are not rooted in reality. ... Indeed, the vaccines are a cause for Christians to rejoice and to give glory to God. The Bible, after all, speaks of medicine as a common grace, discovered by human beings but given by God.” Similarly, Franklin Graham, leader of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, said: “I have been very clear about my support for vaccines. As a Christian, I am pro-life, and I believe vaccines are tools that are being used to save lives.”

However, Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson does not listen to religious leaders, including the Wisconsin Council of Churches. He inexplicably said: “Why do we think that we can create something better than God in terms of combating disease?” Washington Post columnist Michael Gerson called Johnson “America’s most reliable source of unreliable information about COVID-19 – such ignorance might not be feigned.”

Get vaccinated and boosted!

– Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 – 2009.