



“NEVER WASTE A CRISIS!!”

- Our **mission** is to *Reach* people in the Name of Jesus; *Disciple* people in the Way of Jesus; *Empower* people in the Service of Jesus.
 - Our **method** is to ensure that everything we do is *Christ Centered; Word Focused; & Ministry Minded*
 - Our **message** is *the Gospel*.
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Proverbs 3:5-6 (NKJV)

"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, And lean not on your own understanding; In all your ways acknowledge Him, And He shall direct your paths."

Prayer

"Father open my eyes, so I can see Your truth. Open my ears, so I can hear Your Voice. Open my mind, so I can understand Your Word. And open my heart, so I may receive all that You have for me, that is for me. In Jesus Name, AMEN!"

Thought:

Crisis is fundamentally what moved the church from being gathered to scattered. It happened at the beginning of the church and it seems to be happening again in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. As I pray for healing in our land, I am also seeking to discern what God is saying in the midst of all this, and what God would have me and us do as leaders in the church both now and in the future.

The prototype for rapid change through crisis is found in Acts chapters 1–8. In Acts 1:7 Jesus promises the Holy Spirit who will empower the believers to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the world. However, the church stays *gathered* in Jerusalem from Chapter 2, when the Holy Spirit comes on the Day of Pentecost through Chapter 7 when Stephen is stoned. It is only in chapter 8:1, when the full persecution of the church begins, that the church is then *scattered* to Judea and Samaria and ultimately the uttermost parts of the world.

Just as I believe God did not will the persecution of those early believers, but rather God redeemed it to further His missional work, could it be that COVID-19 is pushing the church to rapidly adapt itself to a new normal. **God never wastes a crisis. Instead, God offers us to partner with Him in leading change.**

Winston Churchill once said in reference to the conditions post World War II, “Never waste a good crisis.” The basic idea is simple. Under normal circumstances in organizational life, whether in government, business or church, change happens slowly and incrementally. In times of crisis however, the regular lines of internal politics and bureaucracy are erased, and those who are agile are able to lead large-scale change within the organization, and for the constituency it serves.

Here are a few ways this current crisis has helped and is still helping me personally and may help us to lead change in ourselves and in our church/churches, as I realize there are more sharing in this message, than just **FBCWCH**.

1. Reclaiming My Prayer Time

Just as internet providers are scrambling to boost their capacity in light of everyone being at home streaming Netflix, Hulu, playing video games and teleconferencing all at once, if there are Angels in Heaven in charge of monitoring prayer traffic, they are likely busy as bees as well. Certainly, this crisis has caused a spike in prayer requests, intercessory prayer and spiritual warfare as we have not seen in generations. The larger group of self-identifying Christians in general, and the church in particular, have found the keys to their old prayer closets and put them back into use. Of course, the trick is not just inspiring prayer in the midst of crisis but sustaining it afterward.

In our church, and I suspect in many others, the least attended activities are prayer meeting and prayer services. Well, COVID-19 has changed all of that for individual Christians and the church, as prayer now is being embraced as our top priority. We have an Intercessory Prayer Team, that is regularly praying and lifting up our church, me, my family, individuals, circumstances, etc. We have recently begun a Sunday Morning 10:30 AM Corporate Prayer Call, which we'll incorporate various individuals to participate by reading scripture and offering up specific topical prayers.

We are praying more as individuals, leaders and ministries outside of meetings to do the work of ministry. We are becoming a house of prayer for all people.

2. Pastor's Time

While I am entirely working from home both for my job and church, being out of the office has breathed new air into my productivity. My devotional time, personal time of reflection and time devoted to writing have all increased, as you can see. The unexpected gift of time is a benefit in this crisis for which I am deeply appreciative. Our family has rediscovered the joy of communal meals and generally hanging out together.

I certainly recognize that teams need to be together, and I will be returning to the office soon at some point I know—but I don't miss the commute time, the expense of eating out for lunch or the stagnations of being stuck in the office.

We all know that regular personal Sabbath is so important. The problem is, so is everything else—or the consumer culture of churchgoers that we have fostered makes it feel like it is. The race to make ministries bigger and better only seems to heighten the appetite of the Christian Country club we have come to call church universally.

Reflective time is one of the first casualties of time leaks. **Spending time in prayer, devotion, meditation, study and strategic thinking is not time away—it's the job.** Unfortunately, “the job” suffered pre-coronavirus. David's declaration in Psalm 23 that the Shepherd “makes me lie down in green pastures” has always struck me as odd.

The idea that the sheep is being forced to do something so relaxing and refreshing seems counterintuitive. Yet, I feel that is what God has done or is doing for us in this season—"making us lie down."

3. Leveraging Technology

Being at home has caused me to recognize how many items on my home improvement to-do list have gone undone. **Oh Boy!!** Likewise, creating a more robust online presence and investing in and building greater infrastructure for electronic engagement have been on our church's (and many others I'm sure) to-do lists. Yet, the crisis has not just put it to the top of the list ... it is the list.

Like a uniquely talented but underappreciated athlete longing to get into the game, looking to hear their number called by the coach to go onto the field or court, technology has been waiting to show the church what it can do. From being better connected to our congregation for pastoral care, to providing multiple means for regular giving, to broadcasting our messages to an audience much larger than those who will ever enter the doorways of our church, to teleconferencing and developing more electronic content, things are definitely changing for the church, even if it is by compulsion.

This crisis has allowed technology to take the field, and the church of the Lord Jesus Christ shall be the better for it.

4. Core, Congregation, Crowd

Since the first rule of public speaking is knowing one's audience, the question must be raised, for whom have we been devoting our ministry time and resources? Certainly, for us it has been between our core and our congregation. During this time, it has hit me how all the time and money spent in staff hours and efforts creating print materials, flyers, etc.—they were all primarily inwardly focused. Well, no more!

This season has taught me/us that if we merely focus on those within our walls we do so at our own peril, mostly because it's off-mission. The church of Jesus is ever moving, heralding and trying to reach the lost at any cost for the sake of the gospel. Seeing and hearing the void within the minds and hearts of people because they lack a saving relationship with Christ, and a kingdom perspective, causes me to recommit myself to evangelism and disciple making. Like a computer that is frozen and unresponsive to any input, a hard reset is the only means that can be used to get things going again, and God is using this crisis to do it.

5. Pastoring Rebooted

A steady hand and an assuring voice are needed now more than ever before in our lifetimes. For years researchers like the Barna Group, have documented the decline of Christendom in America, and have worked to wrestle through means of reversing the trend. I don't think those efforts were in vain. I believe they were preparation for this time.

It is like the umbrella salesman who sits quietly in the open-air market while other merchants hawk their wares, seeking to gain the attention of potential customers. He sits quietly reading his newspaper and listening to music on his earbuds. If you wonder why he doesn't put forth greater effort it's because it's hard to sell umbrellas when the sun is out, but when the storm clouds gather—they sell themselves. For myself, and many others as pastors we have become fatigued and hoarse trying to sell umbrellas in the sun, but the rain is here, and it is our time to offer shelter from the storm.

6. The Tables Have Turned

Most choose to focus on the celebratory portion of Jesus' Palm Sunday activities rather than deal with His weeping over a city that will soon fall, or His turning over tables of a religious institution that had become hollow and meaningless. Like the message the Lord gave me on yesterday.

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The truth is, much of the pastoral burnout I have observed or that I hear about from so many in the vocation, has been born out of either their frustration with being unable to pursue what they feel is a ‘God-given vision’ because of organizational resistance, or unending congregational demands which can never be met, and thus leave the pastor utterly exhausted. With this crisis, I believe the opportunity has come for us as Pastors and UnderShepherds to weep for and with the people. To share our humanity, and to enter into theirs with compassion and hope, is the essence of the incarnational ministry that God has called us to live and practice during this time of crisis.

As churches are forced to either rapidly change or close, the normal order of debate and delay have been upended. Just as the federal government has the power to constrain private industry to conform to the needs of the nation in times of emergency, so pastors have been afforded a new means of grace. Thus, if we as Pastors, (specifically me as your Pastor), along with the leadership and you as ‘willing workers’, steward this moment well, I feel strongly that it will lead to a blessing to the church and the kingdom. On the other hand, to abuse this sacred trust and time, will be met with accountability down the road.

Prayer of reflection you might pray this week: "Dear Lord God, as we face our today and look toward our future, in the face of all the changes and challenges that are taking place all around us, we pray that You will continue to be with us to lead and to guide - to help and to protect – to comfort and support. Lord we cling to You, for You are the Rock of our Salvation. Our Protector and our Shield. This is our prayer in the matchless, wonderful and compassionate name of Jesus, Amen!"

May God continue to bless and protect you always!

Pastor King