

## Leading in Times of Crisis

### Introduction:

*"The ultimate measure of a man is not where he stands in the moments of comfort, but where he stands at times of challenge and controversy."* Martin Luther King, Jr.

### I. What is crisis? Definitions

- A. "A time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger; an unstable situation of extreme danger or difficulty".
- B. "An emotionally significant event or traumatic change in a person's life".
- C. "A point or time for deciding anything, the decisive moment or turning poi

### II. A time of crisis can be devastating.

The coronavirus is an unprecedented crisis unlike any other in modern history.

What are the repercussions of this crisis? The coronavirus pandemic has

- A. Caused fear, uncertainty, disappointments, frustration, and insecurity. (We feel out of control and disoriented).
- B. Completely interrupted and halted our ministry activities.
- C. Wreaked havoc on our plans for the year and decision-making.
- D. Caused us to make changes that are unfamiliar to us and to learn new ways of doing things. We have had to "pivot" in several areas of ministry.

### III. Five Key Leadership Behaviors and Characteristics for Times of Crisis

**A. Remember that God is in Control;** remind yourself frequently and remind your team.

1. God is sovereign, and the crisis was not a surprise to Him!
2. Ask God for wisdom from above and guidance for the next steps for your ministry (James 1:5; 3:17-18; Psalm 32:8).
3. Pray that God will keep you stable and steadfast in the midst of the uncertainty so others can trust you as their leader (I Cor. 15:58).

4. Remember that God fortifies our hearts to face challenging times (Psalm 40).
5. Be flexible—your plans may change several times. Be willing to pivot and refocus, as necessary.

### **B. Keep a Positive Outlook**

1. Trust the Lord to keep you positive. Your attitude will be key. Leaders need to maintain a positive mindset even when the going gets tough.
2. Show humility—Remember that your followers may be struggling with fears, losses, and uncertainties just like you are. Humility means putting others first, not self (Phil. 2:3-4).
3. Be empathetic.
  - a. Leaders need to be able to connect to their follower's emotions—anxiety, pain, sadness, grief, etc.
  - b. Some of your team members may be discouraged, irritable or non-motivated as they grieve the loss of normalcy.
  - c. Leaders need to acknowledge people's fears and recognize that they may need support tailored to their individual situation.
  - d. Being empathetic means understanding what each employee is experiencing and helping them to get through it.
4. Maintain a spirit of gratefulness.

Every day we have the opportunity to rejoice over what is important: our salvation, souls saved, God's provision, His grace. . . Luke 10:20 says, "Rejoice that your names are written in heaven".

### **C. Be Candid and Direct in Your Communication** (Leave no room for guessing).

1. Leaders need to be visible by sharing updates with their followers and communication that is as transparent as it can be.
2. It is critical to ensure everyone knows what is going on and has access to information. Be very candid about your feelings and what you're doing as a leader to gather information from others that you can provide to the team.
3. In crisis there are a lot more turbulent attitudes that could quickly spin out of control if team members are worrying about decisions that are being made in which they haven't had input.

4. Let followers know the value of adaptability.
5. It is important for leaders to establish check-in routines or brief touch points to connect with the team on a regular basis.
6. Share a hopeful message for the future.

#### **D. Rally the Team**

1. Remind the team of the CEF purpose statement—our bottom-line mission to reach children with the Gospel. Keep the vision clear in each meeting
2. Keep your finger on the pulse of your team—their energy and emotions.

How are they doing? Feeling? What do they need? Challenge them to take care of each other—to encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25).

3. Challenge the group to work as a team. Foster collaboration and teamwork.
4. Maintain frequent communication. Isolation can creep in if you lose communication.
5. Keep in touch with individual team members (phone, zoom conference calls, face-to-face when appropriate).
6. Have regular staff meetings.
7. Express gratitude for employees' commitment and dedication.
8. Build morale and reinforce team members for hard work and accomplishments.
9. Celebrate all victories, whether small or large. Cheer each other on!

Celebrate how God is working—opening doors, reaching more children than before, creative ways of connecting with kids and their families, etc.

NOTE: With the vision always in mind, crises are opportunities for your team to work together as never before, and to overcome an obstacle together.

**E. Take Care of Yourself—physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.**

1. Maintain a daily quiet time alone with the Lord. (Psalm 46:10)

Claim I Corinthians 15:57-58; Isaiah 40:30-31

2. Pace yourself. Don't try to do too much too quickly.

3. Get plenty of rest.

4. Eat healthy.

**Conclusion:**

Remember the exhortation and courage of Paul who said in Philippians 1:6, "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ. . .". He went on to say in verses 9-11: "And this I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God". (NKJV)

**Resources:**

D'Auria, Gemma & Aaron D Smet. *Leadership in a Crisis: Responding to the Coronavirus Outbreak & Future Challenges*. McKinsey.com, March 16, 2020.

Finzel, Hans. *Top Ten Ways to be a Great Leader*. Colorado: David C. Cook, 2017.

Koehn, Nancy. *Real Leaders Are Forged in Crisis*, April 3, 2020. Harvard Business Review, hbr.org.

Russell, Joyce E. A. *Leading in Times of Crisis*. July 26, 2020. [www.forbes.com](http://www.forbes.com)