



WOW: Word Of the Week

Crisis (Never Let a Good Crisis Go to Waste)

May 27, 2020

I read an excellent article from Les Brickman. He began the article with a quote from Winston Churchill, "Never let a good crisis go to waste."

Shortly after coronavirus was declared to be a pandemic, I wrote an article, "This Can Be the Church's Moment," describing how the early church seized the moment during major plagues in the second and third centuries. The church grew exponentially. Rodney Stark estimates that there were over one million Christians by AD 250. In the first century, the church was established, but it grew because it was scattered. Those present at Pentecost went home; the church was scattered in 8:1-4 and the word went forth. The same thing happened in Acts 11:19-22. The church grew best when scattered; the church grew least when it huddled.

In recent years, churches have struggled with their responses in times of crisis. The weeks following 9/11 saw increased church attendance and interest in spiritual matters, but few churches proactively seized the moment, penetrating the darkness. Around the world, political, social, and economic upheavals occur continually, but few churches have their mission efforts poised to seize the day. Very few churches have known how to keep on being church during the pandemic. Most continue to define themselves by Zoom worship and classes. Outreach is at a virtual standstill!

I write for the church. The ministry of reconciliation that God gave us is not only for us; it is also for the world. Our ministries are centered in our buildings. Very few US churches have experienced significant growth during the pandemic. In mission work, I know of several churches that have continued to grow and have perhaps accelerated their growth. Most US churches are eagerly anticipating getting back into their buildings. Why? That is how we do "Christianity." We define Christianity by assembling rather than by going. We do not know who we are away from the building. We have not learned ministry apart from the building. What percentage of ministry is done away from the building? **My goal in ministry was to spend at least 25% of my time each week with unbelievers.**

For the past three months, we have been in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and a global health crisis. As our nation cautiously reopens, questions remain. Some people are fearful, even church members. God's Word gives us promises of his presence (do not fear), his peace (do not be anxious), and his power (do not lose hope). Do we believe God's promises? Can the church shine in the darkness?

In times of crisis, God's people have an opportunity to demonstrate faith, to share Good News, to speak words of hope. In the midst of afflictions, we have words of comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-6). In times of trials, we have words of rescue (2 Pet. 2:9). This is not the time to draw in and focus internally. This is the time to reach out with a message about God's call, God's consolation, and God's control. The church is most like the New Testament church when it is going, not when it is gathering!

In times of crisis, it is time to seize the moment for the cause of Christ. Every crisis is a challenge, every crisis is also an opportunity. "Never let a good crisis go to waste."