



Ministering in a Post COVID-19 World

This article is provided by Josh Grimes, regional executive director of Open Bible East and a long-standing GCN partner.

If you would have told me three months ago that all churches throughout the world would cease meeting in public services, I would NOT have believed you. Yet, it happened. While churches are still able to reach out virtually, we, as leaders, desperately miss personal contact with our church families, and we have a lot of unanswered questions about what church might look like after the coronavirus runs its course. I do not pretend to have all the answers; however, I want to share ideas from my heart about how to minister to our communities post COVID-19.



STAY CALM

It is easy to get anxious when we think about how things have changed and might change.* Some of you are facing some serious financial issues, or grief over losses, or an overwhelming weight of responsibility to right the ship you as a leader have been asked to sail so to speak. Keep in mind that it is God's ship you are sailing and that He and He alone is responsible for it. Remember the exhortation from Scripture: *"Do not be anxious or worried about anything, but in everything [every circumstance and situation] by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, continue to make your [specific] requests known to God. And the peace of God [that peace which reassures the heart, that peace] which transcends all understanding, [that peace which] stands guard over your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus [is yours]"* (Philippians 4:6-7, AMP).

The exhortation ends in verse 13 (NIV), which reiterates, *"I can do ALL things through him who gives me strength."* God would not have you steering the ship if He did not feel that you were qualified! Remember, this crisis did not catch God by surprise, and He chose you, as a church leader, to steer the ship through these troubled waters. Therefore, STAY CALM and trust in the Lord to lead you as you lead others.



STAY TRUE

It is easy when things get tough for us to try to flex with the environment around us. If the Bible was true and relevant 2,000 years ago, it is still true and relevant today. We are living in a time when the church as a whole has compromised truth in the name of relevancy. It is the tough times that reveal what we are really made of. Do not let your guard down. STAY TRUE to who you are and what you believe. The world might not like it, but it is not the world we live to please. Ultimately, I want to hear the Lord say to me, "Good and faithful servant, I am pleased." Consequently, hold firm and stay true!

STAY THE COURSE

God put a vision in your heart for the ministry you oversee. If this situation we face today did not take God by surprise, then God expects us to stay the course. That does not mean there will not be some things we do a little differently, or that there will not be other opportunities for ministry that arise, but God still wants us to accomplish what He put before us. Before modern equipment, sailors would sail through rough seas by staying the course, navigating from the stars that stayed constant, unaffected by any weather below. Likewise, we must stay the course on which God has placed us and navigate by looking to Jesus, who is not affected by this virus. It has been said that how you start is not as important as how you finish. That is so true. Stay the course and finish your race. A time of crisis is NOT the time to make long-term life choices, but it is a time to hang on, stay the course, and trust God. As we do so, He will lead us. You can take that to the bank!

CAPITALIZE ON OPEN DOORS

One of my all-time favorite Bible teachers once said, "Never waste a perfectly good problem." I remember thinking, "How can any problem be a good problem?" He explained that a miracle can only happen when you have done all that you can do. Then, and only then, can something you cannot do occur, which is a miracle. "So," the minister said, "when facing a problem too big for you to handle, start looking for your miracle!"

The COVID-19 crisis falls into this category. This pandemic is way too big for us to handle alone, so start looking for a miracle! If we will stop worrying and start looking, I think we will find that God is opening doors for us during and through the crises we now face.

Years ago, I preached a sermon titled "*When Going through Hell, Do Not Stop and Shop.*" When we are going through a crisis, it is very easy to pick up anger, resentment, fear, anxiety, and other such things that we cannot afford. Have you ever gone through a grocery store, pulling things off the shelf, only to discover by the time you made it to the cashier that you did not have enough money with you to buy all of those things you stuffed into your cart? How embarrassing, right? Accordingly, when you feel like you are going through hell, do not stop and shop. Stay the course and look for the open doors that God provides because we serve a miracle-working God.

CAPITALIZE ON OPEN HEARTS.

During times of crisis, people tend to do a lot of soul searching. Their hearts are more open for people to minister truth to them. Do not let this crisis go by and miss this chance to minister to people we might not ever have an opportunity to minister to again. This might even mean people in your own church! How? During times like these, God opens the hearts of His people, lovingly influencing them to become Jesus' hands and feet to a world in need. Remember the old promise that God gave to Joshua: "*Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon I have given you*" (Joshua 1:3). Do you think that promise could be applied to the hearts you touch and not just the places you walk? I believe so, and I consistently ask God for those hearts. So do not waste a perfectly good crisis and miss capitalizing on the open hearts it helps produce!



CAPITALIZE ON RESOURCES

Ask yourself, *“What would I do if money were not an issue?”* Do you remember the Scripture that assures us that our God owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Psalm 50:10)? It simply means that God can afford it, period. I have found through experience that God gives us a vision before we see provision. Why? Probably because if we had provision before the vision, we might squander God’s provisions on things that He has not lined up for us. So, never underestimate God’s ability to provide for that which He places in our hearts. The same teacher who told us not to waste a perfectly good problem also said, *“Do not wait for your miracle, but be willing to go looking for it.”* Sometimes miracles do not just fall into our laps, but if, in faith, we go looking for them, we will find them. Instead of simply waiting, which can cause discouragement, we can be searching for that miracle as we would search in a treasure hunt. Who does not like a good old treasure hunt? Therefore, when God places something on your heart (a vision), start the treasure hunt for how God can and will provide. Sometimes we find miracles when we are willing to open doors to look for them. If God guides, He will provide.

ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS HAVE FUN!

Can I be open and honest with you? If you are not having fun doing ministry, then you are not doing it right! That does not mean that we will not have difficult moments or situations. That does not mean that we will not face opposition. Likewise, it does not mean we will like every part of ministry. However, overall, the ministry should be fun. We serve a God who is concerned with us, and He made a significant investment into our joy. People ask me questions, like *“Do you like what you do?”* I answer that question in two ways. First, if it were not fun, I would make it fun. Second, when you are in the middle of God’s calling on your life, it is fun because you have His joy.



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