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The Church Surviving Crisis An Examination of Leaders' Disaster Response

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JAKES DIVINITY

THE CHURCH SURVIVING CRISIS
AN EXAMINATION OF LEADERS' DISASTER RESPONSE

A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO
THE FACULTY OF JAKES DIVINITY
IN CANDIDACY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF MINISTRY

BY
JOEL A. TUDMAN

DALLAS, TEXAS
JANUARY 2023



**PORTLAND
SEMINARY**

George Fox University



CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

DMin Dissertation

This is to certify that the DMin Dissertation of

Joel A. Tudman

has been approved by
the Dissertation Committee on February 15, 2023 for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry in Spirit-Filled Global Leadership in the African Diaspora.

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Abstract

In March of the year 2020, the church would change drastically and quickly. In-person gatherings shifted to online worship. The pandemic fostered change for the church and it had to adapt to a digital era overnight. Abrupt change of such for churches and other organizations called for business meetings and a change in the application of the vision. Some churches upgraded audio and video equipment to facilitate their vision effectively and some closed their doors. The world has seen many crises and the church has always long suffered right along with the world. When a crisis strikes the world like hurricane Katrina, 911, smallpox, bubonic plague, Spanish flu, Ebola; most recently Covid-19 the church seems to find a way to not only survive but to evolve and continue the work of Jesus.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects crises such as covid-19 posed on the church and how leaders and congregations managed them. It will highlight specific leaders and their leadership skills applied to maneuver through crises. This study will discuss the research questions: how can pastoral leadership prepare the church to continue to survive world crises in the twenty-first century? How does the role of a pastor or leader change in the face of uncertainty? Is online worship sufficient for the needs of a traditional church attendee? Finally, this study will identify leadership traits that are necessary for facing any kind of crisis and how to pivot when your strategies are already in play.

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my oldest son that passed at the age of 27 years old while I was working towards this degree. I had him when I was 16 years old. He was a brave and brilliant young man that still said yes sir and no sir. He was a stellar son that was selfless. He always put his brothers and sisters before himself. He had an old but competitive spirit. Losing him was earth-shattering and unexpected. I tried to drop out of school because I could not stay focused due to the freshness of his departure from our family and this world. He was strong, dependable, and always smiling. We lost him and we miss him. There is not a day that goes by that I do not think of him. This degree will always be connected to him. It will represent more than just letters. This will be ours, his and mine, mine and his because I pushed to finish with him in mind every day. I want to honor Doctor Valerie E. Crumpton and Doctor Cynthia James for pushing me to finish the semester he passed.

Everyone I am connected to thought I should have taken off for the semester and returned the following semester. However, these two powerful women spoke to me like caring mothers, and also like relentless believers. They both understood my situation. They established a base of empathy with me in my grief; their instinct gave me the confidence to fight and cry my way to the finish line. I am so grateful that I listened to them and ignored others as well as myself. I only arrived at this point in academia because these two masterminds; giants in the kingdom and the academy took the time to help me heal with my pen in my hand. Thank you so much! Finally, to everyone that has encouraged me on this journey I want to express my love to you. Thank you for understanding my scheduling conflicts for the last three years! I realize I missed a lot of

fun moments and memories but I promise I will do my best to create many more new ones. All of you have been a tremendous support to this moment in my life and again I want to say thank you! I love you. “Success is not just about what you accomplish in your life, it is about what you inspire others to do” – Unknown. All of you have inspired me to be a better me.

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To my family, I want you to know that I love you, and without your encouragement and understanding, I would not have completed this paper. I owe all of you time. It is an absolute honor to serve and protect my family, and I will never forget your unrelenting support. The service and protection at times seemed foreign because of my commitment to this endeavor. However, this same assignment has aided in maximizing the leader within me. Thank you!

To my Pastor, thank you for your enormous push and your culture of “do better.” You cannot do better until you know better. You do not stop at knowing. You repeatedly express, “What will you do with what you know?” Your leadership is first-class and is a tangible pattern of strategic thinking. Thank you!

To Jakes Divinity, I want to thank you for your services. You have not only been strong support, but you have also become family. The online experience has afforded me the chance to meet new friends around the world. Our DMIN cohort has been a tremendous addition to my life. I will miss seeing each of them on advances, but not the work. Thank you!

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. Solomon Waigwa. Sir, your intellect is otherworldly, and to have you as an advisor was a blessing from above. You are definitely a rare mind in the academy as well as in the Lord's church. Thank you, sir.

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Glossary

1. Crisis - a time of intense difficulty, trouble, or danger
2. Leader - the person who leads or commands a group, organization, or country
3. Leadership - the action of leading a group of people or an organization
4. Trauma – an emotional response to a terrible event like an accident, rape, or natural disaster (American psychological association)
5. Suffering - the state of undergoing pain, distress, or hardship
6. Ecclesia - relating to or constituting a Church or denomination
7. Pandemic - a widespread occurrence of an infectious disease over a whole country or the world at a particular time
8. Discipleship - a personal follower of Jesus' life, especially one of the twelve Apostles
9. Grief - deep sorrow, especially that caused by someone's death
10. Tribe - a social division in a traditional society consisting of families or communities linked by social, economic, religious, or blood ties, with a common culture and dialect, typically having a recognized leader
11. Micronation - a small area or political entity that claims national sovereignty but is not recognized by other sovereign states
12. Mental Health - a person's condition with regard to their psychological and emotional well-being
13. Mental Illness - A disorder that can cause psychological and behavioral disturbances with varying severities
14. Reformation - the action or process of reforming an institution or practice

Chapter One

Description of the Problem

Topic/Thesis Statement

A crisis does not suffocate the flame of the church, instead it fuels the fire of the spirit within the church.

NPO

Pastors and leaders historically faced crisis. The Challenge is leaders remaining resilient while maneuvering through disasters and uncertainty.

Story

A religious institution in the city of Cape Town, South Africa, suffered severely from the impact of Covid -19. The Senior Pastor and his spouse founded the institution and the only leaders the church has experienced. This organization was flourishing and on the rise for a ministry its size. This was one of the preferred religious institutions for an African family looking for a small Black middle-aged non-conservative non-denominational ministry. The church was not struggling, but the Senior Pastor passed away and his wife assumed the role of senior pastor. With the loss of her husband, the weight of pastoring people without him, and raising their child in his absence, overwhelmed her. Pastor Coreen Morin was previously in crisis mode and when the pandemic began there were members of the church that died in rapid succession.

Research Question

How can pastoral leadership prepare the church to continue to survive global crises in the twenty-first century?

Claim

Strong churches thrive off of the resilience of strong leaders and leadership teams. They have a grasp on how and what is affecting the world. Churches are reflections of their leadership, and the collection of knowledge of world crises will contribute to the strategy of the church's survival of the unknown.

Intended Outcome

Senior pastors and or representatives will be interviewed about crisis procedures and protocols. Questions will remain consistent regarding established measures from before and during the current pandemic and other crises. Research outcomes should steer efforts towards developing tools to assist the church's navigation through future crises."

Significant Lines of Argumentation & Evidence

- Collect pastoral experiences through interviews with the senior pastor and or representative.
- Research historical data from crises the Church experienced.
- Study the different managerial styles of pastors' responses in a crisis.
- Recognize the unique relationships between medicine, politics, and the church.

Key Qualification

- Participants must hold the position of senior pastor, senior leader, or selected representative.
- Participants will be African American with prior experience before the pandemic.

Overview

One of the most outstanding nonprofit organizations in the world is the church. When the manifestation of God's spirit came into mankind on the day of Pentecost, the church was birthed. Humanity shared everything and learned the disciple's teachings about Jesus. The church survived much persecution. It was born through persecution. Jesus taught the disciples that they would be persecuted because of his name. He said, "if the world hates you, know that it hated me before it hated you."¹ "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." "But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you"² Timothy reminds its hearers that "indeed all who live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted."³

"From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force"⁴ Chapter two of this study will emphasize the Christian church at large and its ability to sustain itself through crises now and for the future. Looking at the fabric of Jesus' teachings, it is fair to say that there is no

¹ John 15:18 English Standard Version.

² Matthew 5:10:44 English Standard Version.

³ 2 Timothy 3:12 English Standard Version.

⁴ Matthew 11:12 English Standard Version.

Christianity without crisis. It has always been surrounded by enemies, and people have been drawn to Jesus by watching his converts live by faith in the face of uncertainty. This chapter will identify various crises that some of the Apostles survived carrying the gospel into a variety of areas. This chapter is designed to illustrate firsthand the fuel that ignites the church despite the disaster and even death. It will explain the role of the church in crises.

What is a Crisis?

A crisis is a condition of instability or danger in social, economic, political, or international affairs leading to a decisive change.⁵ Crises are normal in life. There is not a day on the calendar that goes by that an individual or institution does not experience some form of crisis. Crises do not just interrupt life, they are a part of life. Crises are seen as unstoppable events that can be anticipated or unanticipated. They disrupt and overwhelm the lives of those living the experience. From Adam and Eve (and the serpent) to the Great Depression, the world has continued to face crises. Crises vary from financial, personal, organizational, technological, natural, and confrontational within the workplace. Crises can disturb an organization's foundation and challenge the strategy of management's capacity to respond.

Crises attack people regularly through divorce, death, bankruptcy, betrayal, unemployment, and even the loss of an organ or a limb. Crises vary in ways, whether by the word crisis itself or the behavior towards it:

⁵ "Crisis Definition," Dictionary.com, Accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.dictionary.com/browse/crisis>.

“People are in a state of crisis when they face an obstacle to important life goals—an obstacle that is, for a time, insurmountable by the use of customary methods of problem-solving.” (Caplan, 1961) ...an upset in equilibrium at the failure of one’s traditional problem-solving approach which results in disorganization, hopelessness, sadness, confusion, and panic.” (Lillibridge and Klukken, 1978) ...crisis is a perception or experience of an event or situation as an intolerable difficulty that exceeds the person’s current resources and coping mechanisms.” (James and Gilliland, 2001).⁶

In addition to the aforementioned crises, there are others that should be mentioned:

Developmental crises: These occur as part of the process of growing and developing through various periods of life. Sometimes a crisis is a predictable part of the life cycle, such as the crises described in Erikson’s stages of psychosocial development. Existential crises: Inner conflicts are related to things such as life purpose, direction, and spirituality. A midlife crisis is one example of a crisis that is often rooted in existential anxiety. Situational crises: These sudden and unexpected crises include accidents and natural disasters. Getting in a car accident, experiencing a flood or earthquake, or being the victim of a crime are just a few types of situational crises.⁷

The information above answers the question posed: what is a crisis? This dissertation seeks to broadcast how the church survives crises on a global scale. What are the management skills required for twenty-first-century leaders to develop crisis management plans during times of uncertainty? Developmental crises- one can prepare for; existential crises are conflicts others have experienced and can coach a person through based off of previous experience. Situational crises, however, are sudden and unexpected. These types of crises on any level come with great weight and are challenging to navigate through. The world and the church share the same inhabitants. If the world is facing a crisis, the church is too, because they share the same people group. Not everyone in the world goes to church, but everyone in the church lives in the world.

⁶ Kendra Cherry, “Psychological Crisis Types and Causes,” Very Well Mind, Accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-a-crisis-2795061>.

⁷ Cherry, “Psychological Crisis Types.”

Almost everyone in the church has someone they love that does not associate with it.

When a crisis develops it does so both in the world and in the church. The world at large is always in crisis somewhere on the globe. The International Rescue Committee issues an emergency watchlist annually that informs the world of ongoing crises. “Most Watchlist countries—the top ten in particular—have experienced almost non-stop conflict over the last decade, hampering their ability to respond to global challenges like COVID-19 and climate change.”⁸ The top ten global crises according to the 2022 watchlist from least to greatest are as follows:

10. Sudan—Political tensions amid regional drought and conflict
9. Syria—Economic crisis compounds a decade of war
8. Somalia—Humanitarian access worsens as needs rise
7. Myanmar—Violent deadlock leaves millions in need
6. Democratic Republic of Congo—Conflict and disease compound crisis
5. South Sudan—Regional tensions raise risks
4. Nigeria—Growing insecurity across the country
3. Yemen—Cumulative impact of protracted conflict
2. Ethiopia—A case study in climate and conflict
1. Afghanistan—The crisis after the conflict⁹

⁸ “The Top Ten Crises the World Can’t Ignore in 2022,” International Rescue Committee, last modified July 18, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/article/top-10-crises-world-cant-ignore-2022>.

⁹ “The Top Ten Crises the World Can’t Ignore in 2022,” International Rescue Committee, last modified July 18, 2022, <https://www.rescue.org/article/top-10-crises-world-cant-ignore-2022>.

This listing of events provides the opportunities churches globally have to serve the people. Crisis management plans are critical for outreach services as well as policies and procedures within the church. The church could be more equipped to support the community during crises when perpetually evaluating the current climate of the organization. Often the media and anti-churchgoers constantly critique the church for its absence of any given crisis, not understanding that some policies within the church could be the reason for the delay or the lack of help. A well-developed Crisis Management Plan can equip religious institutions to proactively respond to future crisis the church may face. Nine keys to remember in a church crisis:

1. Focus on being the church.
2. Remember that God is sovereign.
3. Most crises don't escalate.
4. When a crisis does escalate...
5. How important is a crisis communication strategy?
6. Think about the worst-case scenario.
7. View crisis as an opportunity.
8. Transparency is far better than secrecy.
9. Don't be flippant about controversial issues.¹⁰

Complete Story

Coreen Morin, who is the local pastor of Summit Bible Church in Cape Town, South Africa, expressed how jubilant and amazing her church was just a few years ago.

¹⁰ Christian Pinkston, "9 Things to Remember in a Church Crisis," Outreach Magazine, May 12, 2022, <https://outreachmagazine.com/features/leadership/71266-9-things-to-remember-in-a-church-crisis.html>.

The church was well over a hundred plus people and was the type of environment that people desired. Two years ago, covid created a turn for the worst in the church and what was once a contagious jovial atmosphere became known as a place of death and decline. Covid ravished the church like locusts in the biblical days swarming farmer's fields. After 6 months of the disease spreading, the church lost five families, parents, and children. Easily, the most serious was the loss of the pastor's spiritual parents. In addition, the church also lost its assistant pastor, and neighbor. All were victims of Covid. The pastor was affected personally, not just spiritually as a leader. Before Covid, Pastor Coreen stated that it was such a joy to go to the house of God, but immediately afterward, it was a heartbreak. So many family members of the church suffered from the virus.

The Summit Church was multigenerational and it was a place that younger adults frequented regularly. The Summit church was not equipped to sustain itself virtually when the South African government made the decision to stop all gatherings. They were not streaming, had no website, and nor did they have a social media presence. The future of the church looked frail; it was on target as an organization to have the same outcome as the organisms within. The next 6 months of the year grew much worse; more sickness and deaths accumulated within her church. Anxiety outweighed their desire to stay together as a direct result of their fears. Finances decreased drastically.

The Church survived and navigated through challenges despite financial challenges and high death rates due to the pandemic. One of the parishioners took it upon themselves to set up a Facebook page for the church. With the innovation of this new page the pastor could continue to deliver the word of God and the church would

be able to have community digitally. Difficulties for Pastor Coreen continued to multiply during this period as her message preparation became a major struggle. She was almost hopeless while trying to deliver a word of hope to her membership without physically seeing them. She had lost so much personally and organizationally that she had almost tapped out spiritually and she had never taught online or without an audience. Through much prayer, she was able to galvanize a few parishioners which created a flurry of faith and her motivation for sermon-building returned. As she rallied in faith, hope, and love more than 30 members returned after enduring much loss and limited physical touch.

The numbers did not return to what they were pre-covid but the resilience to remain did. The surprise, birthed out of the Covid-centered crises, was a new ministry headed by her daughter Candice. The younger generation returned and increased in nice numbers, but not on Sunday. They have started a ministry named take a stand and are attending on Friday nights with numbers over 50. The above story is indicative of many churches around the world and how covid affected their institutions. Covid created an issue for the church that other crises in the world did not. People were dying so congregating was off the table. The scripture, forsake not to assemble yourselves together became a debate across pulpits and online platforms across the world. How were people going to be baptized, administer communion, marry, be funeralized, or fellowship? The series of questions mentioned above represented many, needing a direct address by the pastor and his or her leadership teams.

The Back Story

Covid broke out all over the world in March 2020 and changed the landscape of how people could gather for various functions. Covid was not the first outbreak the world experienced. However, it was the first that prohibited the church from gathering. This disease was in the air and it was killing people. Although it possessed the ability to spread and take life, it would not take out the church at large. Covid was a real problem for the church, but the church seemed to overcome this problem with its power. The fear of death became real in the ecclesia, and for many, it was their final outcome. For their love of God and their churches, many pastors ceased to worship early on and many of them perished from the disease. The disease that the world's leading scientists and physicians said was deadly was fought by some of the faith leaders in the ecclesia with their belief system. Was this wrong, or right? The answer to this question is locked within the faith of the leaders who made the decisions.

Many people in the ecclesia did not want to let God down, so they stood in faith while also standing in ignorance. Pastoral care became a significant concern for religious institutions, starting with the inability to visit and attend to hospitalized parishioners. Hospitals around the world had restricted visitation policies because of Covid-19. There were countless stories of families that were trying to see their loved ones in the hospitals, only to be rejected at check-in because of how contagious Covid-19 had become. Unfortunately, some people even died alone in the hospital because of the strict visitation rules that were put in place. Funerals became governed by statewide Covid-19 regulations. Such regulations can pose stress on church leadership and their families. Although many churches have complied with CDC guidelines, others feel that those guidelines are an attack against their freedom of religion. "In some cases, religious

leaders resisted state orders, holding services in defiance of warnings from officials. But many others canceled services in an effort to comply with the CDC guidelines, despite state-level exemptions that could allow them to continue communal worship.”¹¹

Hospitals were overloaded as a result of increased Covid cases. For this reason, masks served as the leading preventative method in mitigating this disease. The country experimented with a myriad of masks to determine which ones were most effective. Most businesses required that patrons wore a mask to enter and receive services. It was this implementation that heightened the division in party politics. At the start of the pandemic, Dr. Anthony Fauci stated that wearing masks was not necessary. As quoted by CNN Politics Facts first:

While Fauci, along with several other US health leaders, initially advised people not to wear masks, Fauci later said that he was concerned that there wouldn't be enough protective equipment for healthcare workers. This was also early in the pandemic before public health experts fully knew how contagious the disease was and how it spread. Fauci explained that at that time, “we were not aware that 40 to 45% of people were asymptomatic, nor were we aware that a substantial proportion of people who get infected get infected from people who are without symptoms. That makes it overwhelmingly important for everyone to wear a mask.”¹²

Over time, masks became a hindrance to many until the option to wear or not to wear them was given. Dr. Amy Wecker, a medical health professional, stated that even though masks were optional, they should still be worn in church or religious settings. To

¹¹ Virginia Villa, “Most States Have Religious Exemptions to Covid-19 Social Distancing Rules,” Pew Research Center, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/04/27/most-states-have-religious-exemptions-to-covid-19-social-distancing-rules/>.

¹² “Did Fauci Say Not to Wear Masks?” CNN Fact Check, https://www.cnn.com/factsfirst/politics/factcheck_e58c20c6-8735-4022-a1f5-1580bc732c45 (accessed March 20, 2022).

prevent the possibility of spreading the virus, masks should be worn in church, especially if you belonged to a church that did a lot of singing and physical activity.¹³ As Covid-19 continued its unrelenting grip on the world, many churches developed different views on mask mandates. Because these mask mandates were issued by state governments, every state had different guidelines. Parishioners consequently were left with the struggle of their Pastor's perception and their own perception regarding masks and church. In North Texas, for example, several faith leaders ended up feeling rushed, conflicted, and undecided, however, the decision was left up to their organization. "At First Baptist Church of Dallas, Pastor Robert Jeffress...voluntarily encouraged our members to wear a mask, we require our workers, especially children workers to wear masks, we practice social distancing and we will continue to do that...although we are looking forward to the end of the pandemic, we're not there yet and so I think we need to be careful."¹⁴

The Back Story Continued: 4C Leadership

Courtney McBath wrote a book called 4C Leadership explaining the lessons he learned from the Covid crisis. "As we globally face Covid-19, leaders and leadership are rising. We are understanding principles that we never realized or at least ones we had not been forced to implement."¹⁵ He provides living through 911 and how difficult it was to

¹³ Fox 4, "Should You Still Wear a Mask at Church?" Fox 4 Now, <https://www.fox4now.com/news/4-in-your-corner/should-you-still-wear-a-mask-at-church> (accessed February 8, 2023).

¹⁴ Sophia Beausoleil, "North Texas Faith Leaders Weigh-In on Masks, Capacity Limits," NBC Dallas Fort Worth, <https://www.nbcdfw.com/news/local/north-texas-faith-leaders-weigh-in-on-masks-and-capacity-limits/2572865/> (accessed March 20, 2022).

¹⁵ Courtney McBath, *4C Leadership*, (Dream Releaser Publishing, 2020), 4.

overcome but it could not compare to the crisis that was birthed from the pandemic. He says, “crises tend to be the training ground for leadership.”¹⁶ His objective in this writing is to give tools so the leader can be equipped to handle the stressors of leadership in the worst times. “In the darkest times of your life, you learn what you could not learn otherwise.”¹⁷

Mr. Courtney McBath suggests that there are several levels of knowledge that one should attain to handle crises, however, four were found in the reading. The first level is, knowing the felt needs. In this section he is discussing that leaders need to know the needs of the audience that they are serving. Often, leaders are busy serving what they believe the target audience needs and miss the actual felt need of the same individuals they are trying to help. Leaders in this situation, have to fight their personal feelings to deliver the felt need. In the book, Mr. McBath informs the readers that if a church campus can also serve as a testing center for Covid-19, it would be better to meet the needs of the people in crisis than distributing bibles for a pastor’s religious conscience.

The second level is for leaders to know their personal capacity. “Since so many leaders are ignorant of the felt need of the people they want to influence, they also fail to understand their capacity to meet those needs.”¹⁸ He defines capacity as “the accurate assessment of our resources, competencies and visions.”¹⁹ To be an effective leader, all

¹⁶ McBath, 4.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid., 10.

¹⁹ Ibid.

three must be on deck. Resources can be whatever is available at one's disposal, whether it is people, money, or connections. Competency is basically one's ability and the ability of others to which one is connected. Vision is necessary for the other two to even be available. Without a vision, there is no need for competency or resources.

The third level is to know the intended audience. "Crisis teaches us that in order to get people to listen, be led, and lend you a hand, you need to know who is in your audience."²⁰ Knowing context matters, too, because if not, there is a risk of sending a message with which the context cannot connect. In order for a leader's messages to be clear, knowing who the messages are being transmitted to help in the preparation to bring clarity in crisis. When there is a crisis, leadership cannot afford to try what feels good and looks good. The leader must be diligent and do his or her homework so that time is not wasted and the most value is maximized. The fourth level is for a leader to know both vision and passion. "What governs the human activity is what the mind sees (vision) and what the heart feels (passion)."²¹ In this section, Mr. McBath paints a canvas beautifying it with passion and vision. All leaders should be placed in a role where their passion promotes their creativity, innovation, and fulfills the overall vision. When a leader is asked to operate in a role that is absent of passion, a crisis will create an opportunity for a leader to abandon the ship. When difficult times rise, leadership has to rise with it and the best way to ensure that is by making sure those leaders are functioning from a place of

²⁰ Ibid., 11.

²¹ Ibid.

passion. When working from passion, a leader will be relentless to find answers because it has become second nature. All the crisis does is make you dig deeper.

The Back Story Continued: God, Trump, and Covid-19

Stephen E. Strang intended for his audience to see what God was doing on the earth while Covid-19 was causing havoc in the land coupled with Donald Trump as the president of the United States of America. He believed that the “time had come for each of us; that we were called to seize the moment” (pg.107).²² People in America prayed with more urgency. The pandemic created an entrance for an awakening or a revival. “Reverend Kevin Jessip, president of the Global Strategic Alliance, believed that a tsunami of the Holy Spirit was beginning to flow, bringing with it an overwhelming fruit, dreams, visions, signs, wonders, miracles, and all manner of spiritual gifts” (105). Stephen refers to a prophet by the name of Jerimiah Johnson having a prophetic dream concerning covid-19 and president trump. In his dream, he saw the president at bat for the New York Yankees and a demon on the mound pitching the ball at him. This dream symbolized a system trying to take out the president. During the final pitch in the vision something slowed the hard-fast ball down thrown at the president. He believed it was the supernatural power of God assisting him. Stephens writing attempts to persuade its readers that if the people called to be Christians would listen to God and His prophets, the crisis in the office and the land would set up America for the greatest faith awakening that has happened in years.

²² Stephen E. Strang, *God, Trump, and Covid-19*, (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline Charisma House Book Group, 2014), 107.

The Back Story Concluded: God and the Pandemic

N.T. Wright opens his writing with a powerful quote from Pastor Martin Niemoller regarding Germany and the 1930's. "First, they came for the Jews, but I did nothing because I am not a Jew. Then they came for the socialist but I did nothing because I am not a socialist. Then they came for the Catholics, but I did nothing because I am not a Catholic. Finally, they came for me, but there was no one left to help me."²³ This quote is brought to light by explaining the origination and progressive path the covid-19 virus took to circle the world. It started with the idea of how it began in China, but because Americans as a whole are not Chinese and the distance is far, it was blown off. Iran followed, with Italy next, then London and the news was worldwide, but again these countries were not America.

Finally, the virus landed in New York; normal was no more, the world changed, and some people panicked while others were never phased. "The covid-19 crisis has in fact done to the whole world what Hurricane Katrina did in 2005 for New Orleans: in its devastating impact, it shows that the political and social timbers have already been rotting away."²⁴ Wright repeatedly revealed the end-time theories suggested by some Christian believers. The virus was the key sign for those that believed those theories as mentioned above. The "B-clause" of Amos 3:6 was commonly quoted to support this type of thinking. "When disaster comes to a city, has not the LORD caused it?" There was an opposing vantage point that other Christians believed. They viewed Covid as an

²³ N.T. Wright, *God and the Pandemic: A Christian Reflection on the Coronavirus and its Aftermath*, (London, ENG: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 2020) 10.

²⁴ Wright, 12.

opportunity for the church to talk about Jesus. Mr. Wright leans on his audience to lament. The actual word, lamenting, means to mourn. The chapter entitled, “Where do we go from here?” ironed out the necessity of expressing the grieving process of humanity. He insisted that the church should use the pandemic as a loud announcement to release its stress and weep with one another. “Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.”²⁵ This scripture suggested that the church should mourn with each other just as much as it naturally rejoiced with each other. During the pandemic, many people died alone, leaving the survivors sometimes left alone with questions and tears. “Grief, after all, is a part of love. Not to grieve, not to lament, is to slam the door on the same place in the innermost heart from which love itself comes”²⁶

Early Christians always had a caring heart. Paul instructed the Galatians in chapter six verse 10, “As we have the opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Mr. Wright described the Christians of the early days as selfless people. They would risk their own lives to bring aid to people who were afflicted with all kinds of diseases. The boldness of the believer was coupled with their trust and life with God after death. They cheerfully ran into harm believing that if God did not protect them in this world, He would in the world to come. Mr. Wright discussed Rodney Stark’s famous book entitled, “The Rise of Christianity.” This book showcased how Christians believed during the plagues of the early times. It

²⁵ Romans 12:15 New International Version.

²⁶ Wright, 29.

was their actions of faith during crises that created an increase in the Christian faith. Jesus taught his followers that crises are not always corporate and global, but also personal:

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in, or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you? The King will reply, ‘Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me.’”²⁷

Back Story Completion: 5 Ways to Improve Mental Health in Crisis

During Covid-19, mental health came to the forefront. Before the pandemic, the phrase “mental health” was hardly heard in churches around the world. When people began to get sick and death tolls started to rise, the need for counselors, therapists, and psychiatrists increased as well. Sermons became creative and therapeutic because of the shift in medical protocols, families were not permitted to accompany their loved ones receiving care. As a Pastor, understanding this caused a shift toward therapeutic styles of preaching. This window of opportunity allowed therapists to be welcomed onto the church platform for interviews, conversations, sermons, and other presentations.

Therapist Joshua Smith defines mental health as a satisfactory adjustment to the ordinary demands of life. During the pandemic people that did not know learned that mental health is not mental illness. Smith defined mental illness as a condition that disrupts a person’s thinking, feeling, mood, and ability to relate to others and daily

²⁷ Matthew 25:35-40 New International Version.

functioning. People are becoming more health conscious. During Covid, exercise equipment ran out of stock at just about every store where it is sold. While some physical fitness centers were closed due to the pandemic, others were still open and operating while observing all Covid protocols. Fear kept many people from going to the gym, and as a result, many gained weight during the lockdown. Unfortunately, the public heard more about physical fitness in comparison to hearing about mental fitness. Studies showed that people should be just as aware of their mental health as they are their physical health. Usually, an individual would go to the doctor for his or her annual checkup but for some reason the need to have an annual mental checkup is not as great. “Giving ourselves the attention that we need can almost seem too self-indulgent at times, but learning to be your own mental health advocate is a key piece to navigating a confusing and stressful time”²⁸

According to Amy Dickey, there were five ways one could improve their mental health during any crisis. First, maintain one's own boundaries. In this section, taking time for oneself and analyzing personal spaces is necessary. Once one's own space has been analyzed, discover where there is an overlap of purposes. Separate those purposes so that they do not become mixed. This must be done physically and emotionally. Both are difficult but possible. It will take time and might also be uncomfortable, but every individual's life needs its own attention, especially in a crisis. Secondly, acknowledge

²⁸ Amy Dickey, “5 Ways to Improve Your Mental Health during a Crisis (and Every Day, Really),” Sandboxx, June 14, 2021, <https://www.sandboxx.us/blog/5-ways-to-improve-your-mental-health-during-a-crisis-and-every-day-really/>.

one's own self-talk. "You are the person you spend the most time with and your biggest advocate, so it is important to stand strong in your own corner."²⁹

Everyone has a dominant and recessive voice inside of them. The big voice often gives encouragement to go after the world and tackle big dreams. Unfortunately, the recessive voice also speaks and often is as impactful as the dominant voice. Its impact, however, can talk a person out of the dream because of its constant reminder of personal insufficiency. It is easy to lean toward the recessive voice; sadly, but true, it is primarily negative. It is not only what people say about a person that hurts or hinders their progression, it is also one's inner dialogue. One can greatly benefit from unlearning negative communication.

This can be achieved by speaking positively internally on a regular basis. Amy Dickey suggests that "one should come up with a list of things that they love about themselves and be sure to refrain from asking for help or suggestions from others."³⁰ Thirdly, find a routine that works. Life is about productivity in every area of one's life. God asked man (Adam) to be fruitful and multiply. Productivity is being fruitful and multiplying that which a person has been assigned. Routines are not cookie-cutter, what works for one does not always work for the other. So, one has to explore to experience what is personally perfect. It is necessary to understand that whatever one does not finish today, make sure it is not the same thing tomorrow. Having a routine will allow one to stay conscious of what needs to be done so that something always gets done.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

When a person is in a crisis, routine sometimes becomes the first thing to go. The fourth way is to explore a hobby that encourages one's creativity. Doing something new always brings fresh air, especially in tough times. It is a good brain break. One's mind needs an opportunity to exhale from the crisis that it is experiencing. Whatever one chooses does not have to be challenging, change alone is challenging enough. Finally, celebrate the small stuff. The pandemic took many lives, hearts, minds, and careers. If you have at least one of the aforementioned, that is a reason to celebrate. Celebrating in the midst of sadness is easier said than done; however, if you never attempt it, sadness will be one's automatic default. The small stuff is real stuff and should be highlighted as one progresses in every season of life. Salt, milk, lights, balance, touch, and your sense of smell are small things that people do not think twice about until they no longer have them. With all that in mind, understand that celebrating a new day, another chance, or an opportunity to be on a call to only hear, is just as much of an opportunity to celebrate as closing a new deal. Take the time and celebrate every small victory one can imagine, because it is the small stuff that builds a person's character and keeps them grounded when they find themselves engaged in the big stuff.

Organization of the Remainder of the Study

This study aims to examine the different crises and the effect that they had on the church, whether internal or external. Several crises are examined, like the most recent, Covid-19, racism, and the Roman suppression of Christians. A crisis cannot smother the flame of the church; instead, it fuels the fire of the spirit that moves it. This writing will explore how crises affect leadership, strategy, creativity, and the stability of the

organizations impacted by them. The organization is not the only place that is going through crises, its people are as well. Those that are ministering to broken people are a part of the same brokenness. This study identifies a plethora of leaders, their responses to crises, and the leadership skills they employed during a crisis. “In times of crisis, spiritual leadership must (1) validate anxiety and outrage, (2) calm tense environments, and (3) be as the sons of Issachar who had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do”³¹ The greatest of leaders tend to rise in the face of crises. They do not shy away. They have no problem admitting that they do not know what to do, but they will not succumb to pressure of doing something merely to do it. They will respond because great leaders know that their audience is awaiting their voice. This study will explore the response of the leader and how his or her resiliency provides momentum for an organization in the face of uncertainty. This study, organized into six chapters, will follow this specific order:

Chapter 1 will introduce the description of the problem.

Chapter 2 will provide biblical interpretation for the church surviving crisis.

Chapter 3 will lay a historical foundation.

Chapter 4 will identify and describe leadership in crisis.

Chapter 5 will explore the creative ecclesia in crisis.

Chapter 6 will offer recommendations for further study about the church’s surviving crisis.

Chapter Summary

³¹ Daniel J. Honore, “Lessons from Peter on Ministry Crisis Management,” *Ministry Magazine*, July 2020, <https://www.ministrymagazine.org/archive/2020/07/Lessons-from-Peter-on-ministry-crisis-management>.

Understanding the times is critical for any organization. Understanding means having insight or good judgment. A church has to have both good insight and foresight. A church is just like any other business that serves its clientele. It must possess a close vision with clearly communicated mission steps on how to accomplish them. An organization possessing leaders that understand the times will work quite well, especially when it can respond with hope and strategy in crises. Crises will occur and the church will not always know what to do during those times. The Bible records a group of men that were known for how they handled the times in scripture. The scriptures do not share details regarding the description of the times. These men were from the Tribe of Issachar. In 1 Chronicles 12:32 KJV, it reads, “and of the children of Issachar, which were men that had an understanding of the times, to know what Israel ought to do; the heads of them were two hundred; and all their brethren were at their commandment.”³²

These men knew what was happening in the world and not just what was trending on social media. They also had the knowledge and wisdom of what they needed to do and how to do it. “They had a sense of what to think, how to act, and the manner in which to respond. Real wisdom is always more than knowledge; it is living according to that knowledge in the most appropriate way.”³³ In scripture is another character named Jehoshaphat. He encountered a major crisis with an enemy in war. He prayed to God gave him a specific strategy on how to navigate. Even though the church consists of

³² 1 Chronicles 12:32 King James Version.

³³ James White, “*Church in an Age of Crisis: 25 New Realities Facing Christianity*,” (Ada, MI: Baker Books, 2012), 11.

humans, God did not leave the church to function without his divine insight during any kind of time.

When a crisis disrupts the world, the church will be called upon as the Tribe of Issachar and Jehoshaphat to give hope to the communities, cities, and the world. Even if the church is not sure about its strategy, it is responsible for providing hope in times of crisis. The responses of the church will influence how the world believes and moves forward in crises. “In their book, *America’s Four Gods*, authors Paul Forese and Christopher Bader drew on the 2007 Baylor Religious Survey and Interview project to determine the extent to which people believe: (1) God loves the world, (2) God judges the world, and (3) God engages the world.”³⁴As a result of the experiment, they discovered that in a crisis America could be categorized into four different beliefs about God. Churches face complex challenges, conflicts, and crises that fuel the flames of people’s belief systems. As long as data will support negative trends on church attendance and involvement in the pre-Covid era, the provided data encourages churches to take proactive measures to lead through crisis.

³⁴ White, “*Age of Crisis*,” 32.

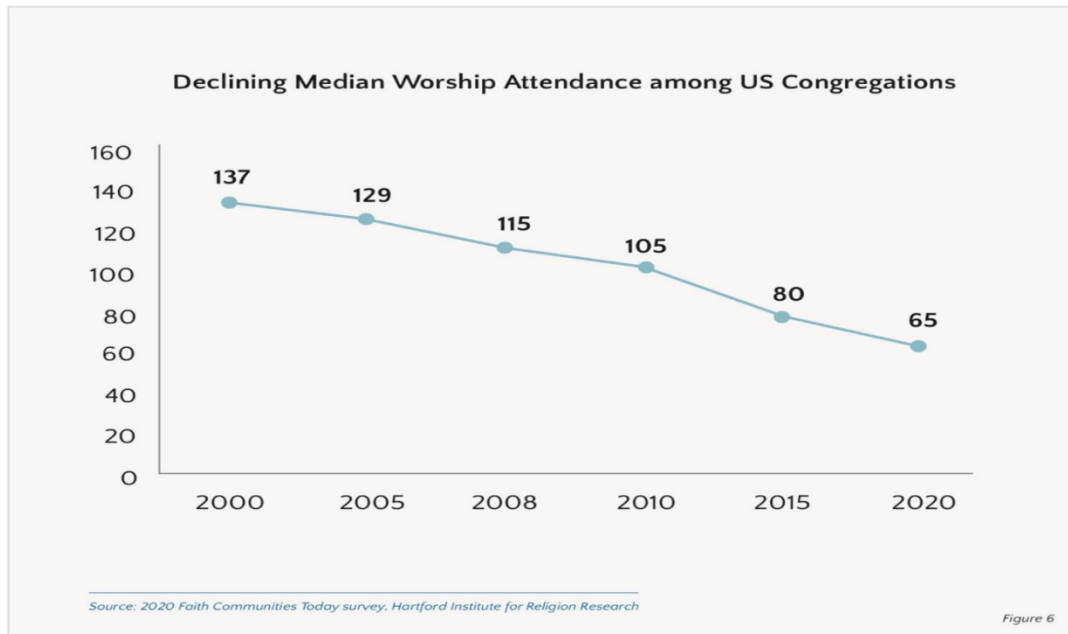


Figure 1. Chart detailing worship decline over 20 years.

“The current approach to church not only isn’t effective, it hasn’t been effective for decades. Yet leaders keep moving forward as though somehow things are going to turn around.”³⁵ The church will have to remain focused and forward-thinking as time progresses or the next crisis will be the church itself fighting for relevance. Crises are expected. “The death of an approach to church doesn’t equal the death of the Church. Changing the approach is the best way to begin to see new growth.”³⁶ New growth in a pandemic will require critical crisis thinking.

³⁵ Carey Nieuwhof, “12 Disruptive Church Trends That Will Rule 2022 and the Post Pandemic Era,” Carey Nieuwhof, <https://careynieuwhof.com/12-disruptive-church-trends-that-will-rule-2022-and-the-post-pandemic-era/>.

³⁶ Nieuwhof, “12 Church Trends.”

Chapter Two

Biblical Foundation for the Church Surviving Crisis

Overview

History at large has its pros and cons. There will always be different vantage points in recalling the past. History is the study of past events, particularly in human affairs. This chapter examined the historical foundation of this study. The historical treatment of Christians will lay a framework for the crisis they faced for their faith. “Unfortunately, the literature of the ancient world comes from upper-class, educated men, and we have no idea what the average, lower-class Greeks or Romans thought of the new movement.”¹ Facts and testimonials will be presented from leaders of Christian history in this document. The Roman suppression of Christianity will be outlined in detail to magnify the perseverance of the Christian follower.

“Tacitus wrote Christians, “were nailed on crosses...sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the night.”² Christianity and Judaism were deprived of innumerable opportunities because of their belief. They were discriminated against, incarcerated, and sentenced to work in mines and they were also murdered. Bishops William Seymour and Desmond Tutu’s experiences with crises of their era slavery and apartheid will be excavated and highlighted. Finally, one of the greatest

¹ Rebecca Denova, “Rome’s Response to the Spread of Christianity,” World History, February 9, 2022, <https://www.worldhistory.org/article/1671/romes-response-to-the-spread-of-christianity/>.

² Facts and Details, “Martyrs and the Persecution of Christians in Rome,” last modified October 2018, <https://factsanddetails.com/world/cat56/sub405/entry-6292.html>.

martyrs in history will be explored, as to how he kept the faith in the face of literal fire. Bishop Polycarp of the Church of Smyrna was a highly esteemed Christian leader. His story, his faith and his death empowered readers, too, as it did in his time to face any crises head on.

The Church

The term church is a body or organization of believers, and of course, it is also defined as a facility where believers assemble. It is called the “ecclesia,” a Greek word that came to mean the church.³ Before the church was ever a building, it was a group of men. Starting with the first man, Adam, to Abraham, and to his descendants in Egypt, God has always had a called-out group. The children of Israel were his chosen nation that started with twelve men that became twelve tribes that grew into millions of people. He has always had a relationship with humanity. Where and when is really not the question, but who is significant in determining what the church is.

Before Jesus, God had been quiet for 400 years. The period was entitled “the silent years.” This is the time between the two testaments, old and new. When God manifested Himself as Jesus in the New Testament, his time in the womb of Mary symbolizes and exemplifies what and how the church would look. The scriptures teach that a man’s body is the temple of the Lord. The words temple, church, and synagogue are all terms utilized for different contexts and purposes as the places related to Israel. Jesus chose to be born in human form as his spirit would be later in the book of Acts. So,

³ “Church,” Britannica, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/church-Christianity>.

the church is more than an institutional structure; it is also a structure of individuality. The twelve men, whom Jesus called the disciples, were commissioned by him to preach the gospel and make more followers of his teachings. These followers obeyed their master and began to do as told. From their calling to the fulfillment of their lives, they were in a crisis. Jesus, his closest followers, and everyone who believed were under constant crisis. From Herod trying to kill Jesus, Paul at Nero's chopping block, and even to John on the island of Patmos, the church and its leaders have been in crisis. Can it be said that the church was born from a crisis? Is it fair to say that sin was a global crisis and God birthed the church out of Jesus' resurrection as an antidote for it? The same can be said for the Catholic and Protestant Reformations. A reformation is an action or process of reforming an institution or practice. The Protestant Reformation was also born out of a crisis that erupted within Catholicism. Martin Luther's Ninety-Five Theses played a significant role in that intense eruption.

It fractionalized the Catholic Church considerably, while inadvertently forming what we know as the Protestant Reformation. Before Luther's Ninety-Five Theses, the Catholic Church and the Pope himself were considered the authority of Christianity at large. When it came to the authority of God's church, this issue created a significant concern for Martin Luther because he believed God was the head of the church. With the Catholic Church maintaining this type of belief system, Martin felt and believed that the Catholic Church needed an adjustment. They already believed that it was possible to pay for forgiveness through financial gifts to the church called indulgences. The Catholic believers thought donations and good deeds or works worked off forgiveness, basically financing and functioning for their salvation. "When Thomas Cajetan read Luther's

resolutions on indulgences he recognized this point, with admirable acuity, as the greatest threat to the papal church: subjective certainty of salvation on the part of the believer could replace obedience to the church.”⁴ Luther began to write concerning justification and how deeds could not justify a man, but they came outside of man freely. He taught that justification has nothing to do with deeds, but was all about what God had done for him. He emerged from the crisis as the leader of a religious movement that became an absolutely profound revolution in the Christian Faith. The church, whether Catholic or Protestant, has always been in crisis, even within its separate worlds, and has always found a way to fuel the faith of its followers, pressing towards its mark. In this challenging case, the conflict created a crisis and from it, God was and still is glorified. The animosity and differences between the two movements did not cause a break in the flow of Godly principles, but people found Jesus even in the separation of the movement. The crises revealed Christ in brokenness. In no way has either movement slowed down. The church is the church, regardless of its significance in any reformation or denomination. The issue at hand is more about the church's fire not being smothered after experiencing a traumatizing conflict. Both Catholics and Protestants are still changing the lives of people who frequent their churches. “Thirty-five percent of Catholics say they go to Mass at least monthly, with Hispanics outpacing whites, 36% to 33%. But those numbers are dwarfed by the 46% of Protestants who say they attend services at least

⁴ Carter Lindberg, *The European Reformations* (Hoboken: Wiley Blackwell, 2021), 231.

monthly.”⁵ These numbers show the survival of both reformations after fighting to stay alive and relevant in a post-pandemic era.

The Church in Times of Crisis

“The church knows that we don’t have to fear because our hope is not in this world. Our Savior is not the government or the healthcare system, but Christ. So, when these institutions struggle, our foundation is not shaken! While we need to be wise and prudent, we are not to be fearful!”⁶ The spirit of fear does not come from God. Fear is common. Often in moments of high tension behind social, criminal, or racial injustice, fear prohibits some churches from seizing the moment to aid in a crisis. These churches, in particular, are usually the topic of conversations regarding churches that bring no impact to their city. This can be an unfair assessment when every religious institution is being judged based on visibility. All roles that churches are playing are not always seen. Some roles are being performed behind closed doors with power the average person would never see, while most are seen on digital media because of the need to look relevant and present. Coming up, a typical phrase that was heard and still is to this day regarding the church and a crisis is, “Where is the church?”

What is the role of the church? What does the scriptures provide concerning crisis?” These are typical questions that are echoed in the halls of God's people

⁵ Mark Pattison, “Updated: Pew Survey Shows Catholic Numbers Hold Steady, Nones Rise, Protestants Decrease,” The Catholic Standard, December 17, 2021, <https://cathstan.org/news/us-world/updated-pew-survey-shows-catholic-numbers-hold-steady-nones-rise-protestants-decrease>.

⁶ Ethan Anderson, “The Church’s Role in A Time of Crisis,” AndersonEthan.com, March 23, 2020, <https://andersonethan.com/the-churchs-role-in-a-time-of-crisis/>.

experiencing a crisis. The church's role in a crisis is critical for the institution itself and the audience it serves. Many people differ in opinion when it comes to the specifics of that role. The term role means an actor's part in a play or a movie. Not all churches play the same role, nor should they be expected to. All individual churches have their own uniqueness that identifies them. The primary role can never be aborted and it should not feel as if its primary purpose is not important. The church's main role is to be a representation of Jesus that builds disciples. Disciples follow the teaching of Jesus, pray, and serve the world with their gifts. This is what makes the church different from any other institution in the earth. Discovering how a church will provide service outside of spiritual matters will be determined by the vision of that individual church. Sometimes crises that exist within happen because of the inability to discover who they are as an organization; that restricts any organization from understanding what is especially necessary in a global crisis. Churches that understood their vision were able to respond in covid-19. Whether white or black many churches were able to respond well in the crises the pandemic created:

Overall, Black churchgoers agree that their churches have responded well to the pandemic. Church leadership across the board has had to remain nimble in this time of uncertainty, responding to shifting regulations and perceptions while also considering the physical, economic and emotional impact the crisis has had on their attendees. For the most part, churches in Black Protestant denominations receive positive remarks for their approaches, with over nine in 10 Black Church congregants (92%) agreeing that their church responded well to the pandemic (64% strongly agree, 28% somewhat agree). Only 8 percent of Black Church attendees voiced that their church's response has been lacking (6% somewhat disagree, 2% strongly disagree). Research also shows a correlation between church commitment and the inclination to offer positive feedback on a church's

response to COVID-19—that is, the more often you attend church, the more likely you are to be satisfied with your church’s response.⁷

The crisis of September 11, 2001, was definitely a day that will forever be remembered around the world. Even though the tragedy that took place was on the soil of the United States, it impacted the entire world. Nineteen Islamic militants hijacked three airplanes and killed almost three thousand people. Approximately 3000 people were killed in the 9/11 attacks that included the terrorist hijackers aboard the planes. Studies show that religious activity went up 6% directly after the attacks, but only lasted a few weeks. Despite the travesty of the circumstance, there was no significant or long-lasting church revival from this crisis. The announcements that were ringing from pulpits across the world were a return to church declaration. Shockingly a reviving return did not happen institutionally, “but more people did lean to their faith and spirituality two months afterwards even as far as ten months after the attacks.”⁸ This is a real revival. Many people confuse revival with the fundamental definition of a series of services. A revival is definitely more than a series of church services. A revival is a personal awakening to God and his kingdom.

After examining 911, it seems that the church as an organization continued on its normal decreasing path numerically. Spiritually, the individual, who is also defined as the church, found a way to fight through the stress of the attacks and became more personally devoted to God rather than within an organized system in an organized structure. T.D.

⁷ “How Covid-19 has Impacted the Black Church,” Barna, June 25, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/covid-19-impacted-black-church/>.

⁸ Jeremy E. Uecker, “Religious and Spiritual Responses to 9/11: Evidence from the Add Health Study,” *Sociological Spectrum*, 28, no. 5 (July 2008): 477. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3118577/#R24>.

Jakes once declared, “Do not think we are dancing without crisis; we are dancing in spite of them.” This is a reminder that the flame of the church is not kindling in a building, but rather within the fabric of a man’s faith. Faith shows up in crisis. Hearing the word decline can dampen one’s emotions, but always remember that the organization is made up of individuals; if individuals were gaining strength in their faith, then the crisis would not have enough power to smother the spirit that fuels humanity’s worship.

As a church, a crisis cannot define you. The organization defines itself, and a crisis is an opportunity for the organization to refocus. Covid-19 was dangerous in its own right. It was intense, deadly, difficult, and intimidating to many, but it also gave churches and other businesses an open playbook to create and facilitate vision in a new way. Crises give you the nerve to do something that has not been done. In the words of Jonathan Bernstein, “Failure of an organization to anticipate and prevent potential crises is a rampant crisis of its own.” This is exactly what happened. No one could see Covid-19 approaching as the deadly murderer that it has become. When the 2020 pandemic came, it affected the entire world in a way that caused an evolution as it pertained to doing life in the world. In January 2020, no one knew that the church norm would soon be shattered. Yet by March 2020, churches around the world began to close in rapid succession due to the havoc of Covid-19.

A six-foot distance between individuals became a requirement everywhere, including church. The new norm of how life was to be lived also changed how Sunday morning worship was to be experienced. Online church was not new; however, it was not the focal point of a Sunday morning worship service pre-pandemic. Websites, apps, and

Facebook Live were already in play for many churches that were using online services as a supplement or enhancement to the local institution. During the pandemic, any church that wanted to stay open had to rally digital efforts to remain an option for people. The church fought back with technology as a tool to recreate community and worship in one of the worst times in human history:

“When global crises come, one of the main questions that arise from faith traditions, whether church or unchurched, is why does God allow things like this to happen? Well, here is “my” answer, born of my faith.... God is NOT causing this. A virus out of control is causing this. Our world, though lovely and deeply treasured, is nonetheless vulnerable, limited, and imperfect. God gives us the gift of freedom and respects our freedom. We make choices that not only have an impact on us but on others and on the earth’s community. There is nothing like the experience of this pandemic to confirm the depth and stretch of this impact! Indeed, we and all that is -are interconnected. Our faith traditions also teach us that God is almighty, merciful and full of goodness and kindness, who can make all things turn to our good. For those of us who are Christians, Jesus, the Son of God chose to suffer with us, to be with us on our journeys of sorrow and loss. Jesus opened himself to full human suffering and is one with us.”⁹

A crisis is useful in that it unifies people in search of solutions. Crisis have a way of bringing all sides together before politics create a divide. The good of humanity is often the source of unity in crisis. As the church discovers its role in the conflict, it can be sure it will attract critics. Critics do not take off because of conflicting times. The church alone is a breeding ground for criticism, but you can almost guarantee that when a church acts in a managerial role of support, it will be critiqued. The great news is that the church does not find its mission where hurting people is not. The church has always been called to heal the hurt in the best way it can. Jesus said, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me

⁹ “Faith and Spirituality during Global Crisis: How to Find Peace in the Unknown,” Notre Dame of Maryland University, accessed April 28, 2022, <https://www.ndm.edu/news-and-events/news/faith-and-spirituality-during-global-crisis-how-find-peace-unknown>.

because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recover of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,”¹⁰ Conflict and crisis have always been the apple of Jesus’ eye. He is a healer; the church is a healer. Crises are a call for all churches to pursue in a unified fashion to serve the world it lives in.

The Church of Antioch

The church of Antioch was established in the early church era with people fleeing to it in crisis trying to survive. The church not only survived combative occurrences because of its belief in Jesus, it also responded to Jerusalem’s crisis in the spirit of generosity during a famine. Antioch was a city founded by a sub-general of Alexander the Great named Seleucus 1st also known as Nicator; he named it for his father. Over time, it became known as the Seleucid capital, and he established his own Seleucid dynasty placing kings in different areas. Under Augustus’ reign, Antioch expanded greatly and became the mother city of Syria. It was the capital of the east, second to Rome. It was standard to see the people worshiping Baal and other gods there. “Now they which were scattered abroad upon the persecution that arose about Stephen traveled as far as Phenice, and Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to none but unto the Jews only.”¹¹ The diaspora of Jews happened because of intense persecution and the death of Stephen, who was one of the first deacons and first martyrs of the followers of the way.

¹⁰ Luke 4:18 (King James Version).

¹¹ Acts 11:19 (King James Version).

The Jews on the run from this crisis only witnessed other Jews, however, that would change. “And some of them were men of Cyprus and Cyrene, which, when they came to Antioch, spake unto the Grecians, preaching the LORD Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them: and a great number believed, and turned unto the Lord.”¹² The gospel was preached to those that were not Jewish. They had a conviction about Jesus and did not limit it to one ethnic group. They preached until many Greek-speaking gentiles believed. The conversions were in such great numbers that the news reached the church in Jerusalem. These people were turning, or rather repenting, to the Lord because of the willingness of these men to share Jesus with them.

The suppression of Jews, coupled with the murder of Stephen, birthed a church full of Jews and non-Jews. The awakening in Antioch created such a stir that the church back in Jerusalem sent Barnabas as an ambassador to see if it was true. When he arrived there, he encountered the grace of God in such a way that he cheered them on. He later left for Tarsus to find Saul and take him to Antioch. Both Barnabas and Saul lodged in Antioch for a year teaching and discipling. It was in Antioch that you heard the first mention of the followers of the way calling themselves Christians. “Here believers were first called Christians. With its mixture of Jews and Gentiles, the church at Antioch became fertile ground for the growth and spread of Christianity and a model congregation in the early days of the new Christian church.”¹³

¹² Acts 11:20-21 (King James Version).

¹³ “What is the History and Significance of the Church at Antioch?,” Got Questions, last modified January 4, 2022, <https://www.gotquestions.org/church-at-Antioch.html>.

“The purpose of sending Barnabas to Antioch was to see if the gentiles that were believing in Jesus were legit. After witnessing and participating in the work of Christ, their legitimacy was recognized. From persecution, to passion in the faith, the flame burned in the wind of the Jewish diaspora. When the story of documented persecution is highlighted without Antioch, you could possibly lose hope and see the flame being smothered by pain. It was the pain of discrimination and death that fanned the flames of revival that created a church plant in Antioch.”¹⁴ The church at Antioch was a prime example in a biblical period that exemplified the collaborative efforts of leadership and refuge needed for a church during crises.

The Apostle Peter and Crisis

The entrepreneur, who at one time was called Simon, partnered with his brother Andrew in the fishing business. They owned their boat and fished for a living. His life, and the lives of three other fishermen, were drastically changed on the day that Jesus came. “And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.”¹⁵ Jesus changed what Peter, his brother, and the sons of thunder were fishing for. They went from fishing for fish, to fishing for men. This initial call was not to the apostleship, but rather to discipleship. Peter would go on to follow Jesus to his death, resurrection, and ascension. The time he spent following Jesus was a

¹⁴ Dr. John Stevenson, “Acts 11:19-30. The Church in Antioch,” July 23, 2021, video of a sermon, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJ8J3pl5j28>.

¹⁵ Matthew 4:18-20 (King James Version).

little over three years. During the time of Jesus' ministry, he kept Peter close while teaching the other eleven disciples a wealth of knowledge regarding the kingdom of God. Peter grew very close to Jesus while he was walking the face of the earth. He was considered to be in Jesus' inner circle. An inner circle is defined as "a small group of people who lead a government or an organization or who are close to its leader."¹⁶

Peter was very outspoken and considered the key spokesperson of all Jesus' followers. He was courageous, and the first to speak up regularly up until the hour Jesus was seized. He was such a valiant follower that he took his sword and chopped off one of the ears of one of the soldiers who came to capture Jesus. His faith was full of bravery, but there was a crisis within it. He was strong in faith until he was accused of being a follower of Jesus. It was not his finest hour. He denied Jesus because he feared for his life. This was the same man who was willing to die for Jesus' life only a few hours earlier. Jesus knew it would happen. He actually warned Peter of how it would take place. "Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, that this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice."¹⁷

Peter denied Jesus as he said he would. He gave into his fear of being associated with him. His denial was an inner crisis that he had to deal with until Jesus restored him. This occurred when He asked him, "Do you love me?" as many times as he denied him. The time Jesus took to have a one-on-one with Peter after denying him was critical for his responsibility to fulfill the mission. Jesus' death shook Peter and the others so much that

¹⁶ Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s. v. "inner circle," accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/inner%20circle>.

¹⁷ Matthew 26:34 (King James Version).

they decided to go back to fishing after they buried him. Jesus went to see Peter and conversed with him until he restored him. After Jesus was resurrected, he spent time with Peter and many others teaching before he ascended into heaven. When Jesus departed, he left Peter and the other eleven with a promise that would be fulfilled for them to carry on the work he started. When the promise of his spirit manifested on Peter and the others in the upper room, they began to preach out the New Testament church. From the time of Jesus' public ministry and the birth of the church, it was constantly under attack by its Jewish brothers and Roman oppressors.

Peter, in his writings, shared with his hearers in Chapter 1 and verse 6, “in all this, you greatly rejoice though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials.”¹⁸ Peter encouraged the hearers that the faith that has been delivered unto them is worth the suffering. He went on to share in verse 7 of the same chapter in the NIV version, “these have come so that the proven genuineness of your faith of greater worth than gold which perishes even though refined by fire, may result in praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.”¹⁹ It is quite the crisis to be scrutinized, villainized, and targeted because one believes. The author himself is doing his best to encourage his audience to understand that this treatment reveals the genuineness of a person's faith. This is horrifying and damaging to the psyche and the body, but yet elevating to the belief system. That is what makes this a crisis. Good and bad living together in the same faith. Peter encourages his hearers more in verses 8 and 9 of the NIV

¹⁸ Chuck Swindoll, “The General Epistles: First Peter,” Insight for Living Ministries, accessed December 22, 2022, <https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-general-epistles/first-peter>.

¹⁹ Swindoll, “First Peter.”

version by sharing this, “though you have not seen him, you love him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the end result of your faith, the salvation of your souls.”²⁰

Peter profoundly writes a passage that justifies suffering as a good soldier when he addresses his hearers in verses 12-16, Chapter 4 in the NIV version. He says:

Dear friends do not be surprised by the fiery ordeal that has come on you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice in as much as you participate in the suffering of Christ so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ you are blessed for the spirit of glory and of God rest upon you. If you suffer it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear the name.²¹

Peter was insisting on informing the persecuted gentile Christians that they belonged and that they were chosen by God. “Living in close proximity to Jesus Christ for more than three years provided the apostle Peter with the best possible example of what it looked like to live in holiness amid a hostile world. More than any other man who walked the earth, Jesus modeled that lifestyle. Peter, therefore, pointed his readers in the best possible direction, to Jesus Himself.”²² His writings comforted the Gentile Christians, who were living in crisis and suffering for the cause of their confession. The same writings can be used today to aid a leader in crises. In particular 1 Peter 2:13-17

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Swindoll, “First Peter.”

²² Ibid.

NIV he provides scriptural advice on how to live with those who mismanage power over others. He encourages believers to submit to authority, doing good silences the ignorant, live free for God, respect everyone, and honor the emperor. Peter suggests that a crisis should not change the believing status of the individual facing it. Peter wants the persecuted to set their faith on Christ and not the crisis itself. He was an example of his own suggestions. The emperor at his moment of ministry fulfilment was Nero and he ordered his death; yet Peter was in full submission during his hostile rulership. He remained in order in the face of crisis.

The Apostle Paul and Crisis

Paul was unlike any of the disciples that preceded him following Jesus. Like the others, Jesus did come looking for him, however, not in the same form. Paul's call to discipleship or fellowship was done in an unusual way. He wasn't fishing or collecting taxes, he was a literal persecutor of the church. He was after all of the followers of the way. "Followers of the way" was a phrase used to describe Christians before they carried that name. Paul was known earlier as Saul prior to his conversion. He was born in Tarsus of Cilicia, and studied under Gamaliel, a Jewish scholar. The name Gamaliel is a Hebrew word that means "the Lord is my reward." He was one of a first-class group of Palestine masters of the Jewish Oral Law, and a teacher. Some Jewish traditions say that he succeeded his father and his father. They were long members of the Sanhedrin Council, which is also called the supreme Jewish court. He received the title of Rabban (teacher) first of all the Jewish scholars.

Saul was a righteous Pharisee, and his family was God-fearing. He loved God and was willing to fight for what he believed in. Saul, who was Paul before conversion, was

seeking sanction to persecute Christians. Once he received sanctions, he went after Christians in Jerusalem and was on his way to Damascus. Saul asked for permission from the high priest to go into Damascus and bring back, bound, all the Christians he could gather. He was present at the death of Stephen. Stephen was the first deacon and martyr of the Christian faith. Saul was not only there in the number at his death, he gave the approval of his stoning:

Thus, when it is said Acts viii. 3 (before he had received a sanction to prosecute the work in Damascus)) that he "made havoc of the Church, entering into every house, and, haling men and women, committed them to prison," it is fair to infer that he had obtained leave from the public authorities to do so. In fact, this is more than implied in the language used—"committed them to prison,"—since it cannot be supposed that he would do this on his private responsibility. It is certain that when he entered on his great work of persecution when he went forth to a foreign city to lay waste the Church formed there, —he had the express sanction of the high priest.²³

It is believed that he was not on a persecution mission of his own, because of the sanctions and the phraseology committing Christians to prison. To do both, you have to be empowered by a force or a system greater than yourself. His reputation had preceded himself regards to the persecution of Christians. He was a young man. His age surprised many during the era because the Sanhedrin is a group of older men. They were aged men that were responsible for Stephen and Jesus' death. "He engaged in this work under the influence of conscience, as a service which he felt he was bound to render to God, putting forth all his energies because he thought that he "ought to do many things"—these things— "contrary to the name of Jesus of Nazareth"²⁴

²³ Bible Study Tools, "Saul, a Persecutor," accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/classics/barnes-scenes-in-life/saul-a-persecutor.html>.

²⁴ Bible Study Tools, "Saul, a Persecutor."

Saul's mission to persecute Christians was a crisis for the church. What made him so fierce was the fact that he was a young man full of energy. It appeared that he was on a trajectory to be a long-time hindrance to the church. On his way to Damascus to hunt down more Christians, he met Jesus in an encounter that completely altered the trajectory of his life. He did not physically see Him, but rather through a Christophany. A Christophany is also known as theophany and angelophany. All three terms are tangible manifestations of God that the human senses can perceive. "The Lord appears in theophanies both to bless and to judge."²⁵ While Saul was on his journey to Damascus for persecuting purposes, he was caught off guard with just that, a Christophany.

As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me? Who are you, Lord? Saul asked. I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied. Now get up and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do. The men traveling with Saul stood there speechless; they heard the sound but did not see anyone. Saul got up from the ground, but when he opened his eyes he could see nothing. So, they led him by the hand into Damascus. For three days he was blind and did not eat or drink anything.²⁶

Jesus questioned Saul about his mission for persecution. The moment in question created a new crisis, but this time it was directed at Saul. The Christian persecutor was confronted by Christ. This confrontation caused a crisis in Saul's faith. Saul asked who the Lord was, and from that moment, his reason for being in Damascus was altered. He left with instructions from the Sanhedrin Council, but on the way, his instructions and his source were shifted by Jesus. He had met the very source of those he had been

²⁵ Bible Study Tools, "Theophany," accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.biblestudytools.com/dictionaries/bakers-evangelical-dictionary/theophany.html>.

²⁶ Acts 9:3-9, (New International Version), "Saul's Conversion," Bible Gateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=acts%209&version=NIV>.

persecuting. Jesus did not ask Saul if he would follow his directions; he demanded that he did what he asked. Those that went along with Saul to assist in his original assignment heard, but didn't see what Saul saw; it left them without commentary. The mystery at that moment increased the impact of the crisis on Saul's faith because there was no one available that he knew to discuss what transpired on the journey to Damascus. The unexpected mysterious meeting, coupled with the unforeseen blindness of his eyes handicapped him literally, but was also the beginning of his dependency on Jesus.

Saul's old faith at that time was face to face with what would soon be his new faith. His faith was in crisis, and now he was forced to live for the next three days like those he had been hunting. It is interesting enough that faith comes by hearing, and all he had after his collision with Jesus was his ears. He was led, by hand, to hear what God was going to do next by a man God had already instructed how to deal with. Saul had met the Christ in his crisis, but did not know what to do next. After three days of blindness, Ananias was told to look for Saul by Jesus in a vision at the house of Judas on Straight Street and to lay hands on him to restore his sight:

Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands-on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord—Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here—has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit. Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength.²⁷

Saul was chosen by Jesus to share the gospel to the Gentiles. Gentiles were any other people group that were not Jewish. After spending many days with disciples in

²⁷ Acts 9:3-9.

Damascus, he learned more about Jesus. The persecutor of the past, became the persecuted, because he began to proclaim the name of Jesus without shame. His new faith put him in new crises. He had to dodge death regularly, retreat, and disciples in Jerusalem were still afraid of him because they did not believe that he had changed. Saul's new-found relationship with Jesus brought him a great deal of trepidation. While he was converting, the church was at peace. Jesus created a way of escape from Saul's grip of trauma he caused on his believers. Going forward, Saul decided to longer go by Saul. Jesus did not change his name. He had a dual name, which was not uncommon in the era; Saul was his Hebrew name and Paul was his Roman name. He used his Gentile name the further he moved out to minister into Gentile lands:

Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law, I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel so that I may share in its blessings.²⁸

The church grew stronger when its persecutor became a believer in Jesus. Paul's conversion was a significant example of how the church survived in the face of persecution. His life allows you to see the supernatural shift that comes with submitting to the will of God in your life and institution. There are many stories in scripture of him being persecuted for his faith in Jesus, yet the church still grew. First, Paul's emphasis in

²⁸ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23, "Paul's Rights as an Apostle," Bible Gateway, <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=1%20Corinthians%209&version=NIV>.

his writings are on Christ as the reason for living. With Christ being the primary factor in the human existence it removes self as the king or queen of its own kingdom. Through the lens of scripture, the Christians fuel to face a crisis does not come from self but from God. You can do anything through Christ is somewhat one of his mantras. He demonstrates the perspective of mankind empowered by belief in Christ. Paul shares in Philippians 1:21-24 NIV the mindset he is trying to influence Jesus followers to grow into pertaining to life. Whether alive or in death the believer aka church is still connected to God so the crisis is never the main character Christ is. This mindset is what one could say growth is. It is not limited to an increase in numbers, but to an increase in internal capacity. The church can advance in both creating well rounded humans and not just members of religious institutions.

Chapter Summary

From the creation of time, chaos has been a part of human history. The church is a part of human history being the called-out ones from the world. Trials, tragedy, trauma, triggers, and triumph have all affected the Christian faith. Throughout biblical times through today, the church has not retreated from crises, instead, it has run full speed toward them. This attraction to troubled times resembles the founder of the faith. Jesus Christ came to a world that was in a crisis, and He gave himself as an answer to heal man's problem that had no solution. "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."²⁹ The Bible describes him as becoming sin, even though he never sinned. The

²⁹ John 3:16 (King James Version).

genesis of the whole movement was about saving man from his crisis. Sin was and still is, the crisis that man wrestles against on a daily basis. It is the spiritual Covid-19 that spreads so easily. With man being born into this crisis, he needed a savior to repair what he could not do on his own. Jesus, and the followers of the way, started a movement that progressed from 12 men. These twelve would become the foundation of the church before it became an institution.

They healed and preached in the face of terror, trial, and threats. They watched their teacher confront Pharisees and Scribes regularly. Facing crises was normal. One could say that it was really traditional for the believer to be on alert for threats from those that did not like them and those who were unbelievers. From the upper room to Stephen being stoned, to Antioch where the first Christians were named, there had been numerous crises that the church has survived. The church survived Saul the church killer. The crisis he created for the church was overcome by God's divine interruption. He would later experience the same pressure from the calamity he imposed on people. Regardless of who the oppressor has been, the church has found a way to fan its flame and stay on fire in the face of any catastrophe.

Chapter Three

Historical Foundation

Overview

Leaders are necessary for any organization's sustainability and advancement, especially when the organization is confronted with uncertainty and crisis. Leadership is guidance and headship but it is not Lordship. Good leaders lead while respecting those whom they have been assigned to guide. Lordship is supreme and is only done by God which is why leadership can never cross into Lordship. No real organization wants a Lord. They want a leader. This chapter will define leadership at its core and highlight the leadership's responsibility in a crisis.

Leaders see crisis as an opportunity to determine health. Leaders also recognize that a crisis acts like a thermometer. It tells the temperature of how we have led up to this point. The strengths and weaknesses of our preferred ministry model will soon be on full display. Many of us will soon learn the value of having a financial margin. We will find out just how strong our discipleship pathways and leadership pipelines are.¹

This study will examine the political impact of leadership, politics, and the church. It will cast a light on what it means to be a resilient leader and put on display black resiliency in the seat of leadership. Many crises will be visualized in this section and how a myriad of them could not smother their flame. This writing will show how their fire was fueled to fight even the crisis of being Black in America and Africa. The

¹ Scott Ridout, "3 Observations about Crisis, Leadership and the Church," Converge, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://converge.org/article/3-observations-about-crises-leadership-church>.

voices of Black leadership, the idea of voiceless Black leadership, and how the Black family can shape new leaders will all be discussed in this chapter.

Roman Suppression of Christians

Christians endured slander during the Roman era. They were accused of hatred for the human race, which was considered the Roman world, and were charged with atheism. The Romans had an exalted view of who they were as a people group. The Christians were accused of hating the Roman Empire because they refused to worship the Greco-Roman gods. Christians were accused of cannibalism. On the Senate floor, a senator said that the Christians were skewering babies in dough and eating them. It is assumed that this thought was a misunderstanding of the Lord's Table. They were eating and drinking the blood and body of Christ. The Lord's Table always took place in a closed setting. The unbaptized and unbelievers were not allowed to see it. Rumors started because they couldn't see what was going on behind locked doors. Other additional salacious accusations prevailed against Christians. Even incest was a specific charge.

Romans did a lot of activities that would have been considered to be lacking in integrity, but incest was a lifestyle they viewed as ridiculous as much as the Jews did. This misunderstanding was believed because of the word agape. Agape is one of the Greek words for love. Atheism in the Roman world, cannot be found in the ancient world. Christians were called atheists because they rejected the Roman gods. A man that was not Roman and outside of the area, was a man that was not considered human, so to worship him was atheism. Also, choosing not to worship their gods was a slap in the face.

So, to argue that this was the sole way of worshiping Jesus is unbelieving (See appendix A).

Paul called the preaching of the cross foolishness because, to the Romans, it was foolish that God would be crucified, let alone crucified in the way that the Romans demonstrated their Empirical power. It took three days to die. Why would a God take that route? It was shameful for the Jews that God would be crucified. The foolishness of the gospel could not stop at the incarnation. It went into the scandal of it, dying the death of a slave.

Christianity was born in a crisis, and the Christians “Christianized” the Roman Empire. Their persistence to gather, regardless of the consequences, and for the priest to preach regardless speaks volumes of their faith. There was an early persecution of Christians approximately around 100-240 AD. This period was in the time of the apostles and there were sporadic persecutions. There were only a handful and not thousands but Christianity was an illegal faith. Even though Christianity was illegal, the Romans mostly ignored them in the early church period. The Roman Empire had two divisions. First, there was the Principate approximately around 31 BC - 284 AD. During this period, Julius Caesar was the emperor. During this time as the emperor, he had to get the senate’s approval, and couldn’t treat them as if he was greater. The emperor Julius Caesar was equal.

He was in charge, but he focused on global politics and some local, but definitely not Christianity. The Christians weren’t seen as a threat, so there was not a widespread hunt for them. Secondly, the Dominate approximately around 284 - 476 AD is greater

than the senate and he referred to them as the dominatus, which is the same as lord. He was fully in command. His command was more like a Persian style of governing. This was a time before Constantine was in power, and before the real persecution began. “One of the reasons the persecutions picked up was because many of the rulers came from the army, had stiff spines, and they were strict men who did not like people that didn’t worship the gods.”² The Romans saw Christianity as connected to the Jewish faith called Judaism. Despite both being Jewish, the Romans knew the difference because those that were in Judaism would point out that the Christians were not them. The Jewish population was approximately 8-10% of the Roman population, which was a large number. “The Jews were very intellectual and a deep study of the scriptures was birthed out of Alexandria as they populated the area.”³

The Romans respected the Jewish religion because they had some respect for it being ancient. Though they respected the Jews, they kept them at arm’s length. The Romans thought monotheism was foolish, but they respected them. Rome had some difficult times with them, like in Jerusalem. It was such a mess Emperor Pompey had to take over the city, but he eventually installed Herod the Great who was half-Jewish. Pontius Pilate was over the proconsul which is over the city of Jerusalem, and the Jews had the Sanhedrin Council over their religious affairs. The Jews were strong in Jerusalem, and Rome had Pilate in authority there. He was considered a joke and did not really know how to make

² Dr. Monte Shanks, “Persecution of Christians in the Roman Empire,” Ask a Bible Prof, October 17, 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ka-HGgq-ZQU>.

³ Shanks, “Persecution of Christians.”

decisions like a true ruler. Later, the Romans were in belief that the Jews were headed their way in an effort to cause mayhem, but they were not until Rome came after them.

Different Emperors attempted to antagonize the Jews, like Caligula, an Emperor who tried to put a statue in the temple and it didn't go well for him and his soldiers. Procurator Gessius Florus broke in the temple and stole the temple treasure. He went into hiding and left the city. The city of Jerusalem went into an uproar, and the first Jewish-Roman war took place approximately around 77-73 AD because of it. The Jews believed in the faith, and were willing to fight for it. The Romans respected that, even though they would put them down. On the other hand, "the Romans saw Christians as a new, pacifist, and strange but they never referred to Jews that way. Accepting suffering was strange to the Romans, not fighting for yourself, nor your God fighting for you was weak and made your God look weak as well."⁴ Emperor Nero came to the throne approximately in 54-68 AD. During his reign, the Romans were violently oppressive of Christians.

A pivotal moment came when Rome was set on fire; Nero was implicated, but he denied it and passed the blame on the Christians. This scenario created an appetite for revenge against the Christians who were completely innocent. His persecutions were intense. "Nero wrapped Christians in cloth, poured oil on them, and lit them on fire to use their bodies for light."⁵ Nero was vile, but still, his persecution was short-lived and localized in Rome. His persecution, contrary to popular belief, did not happen throughout the empire. During the reign of Emperor Trajan, approximately in 53-117, he

⁴ Shanks, "Persecution of Christians."

⁵ Ibid.

implemented Trajan's Law and set it into place when a growing number of Christians began to populate a Roman area. Proconsul Pliny, the local leader of that area, was worried because the Christians were growing in large numbers. He was worried that the Christians were going to start converting people, so he wrote Emperor Trajan about it. The Emperor wrote back what became known as Trajan's law. It stated several instructions. One: if two or more are accused of being Christian, put them on trial. Two: set up a sacrifice, and you would know what they were by how they handled the meat. Three: once their belief was discovered, and Christianity was determined, then you could kill them. Four: do not seek them out. Five: do not listen to hearsay.

“Trajan's view was merciful to some, and others, cold-blooded.”⁶ He made Christianity illegal, and if anyone was caught preaching, it would be the death penalty. If anyone was caught gathering, they would receive the death penalty. The death of Christians began to rise. The Romans wanted to scare them, and really ignore them if they could unless they caused uproars. Christians like the disciples caused issues for the Jews and the Romans; all of them but one died violent deaths at the hands of the Romans. Later, Cyprian of Carthage was put to death by the Romans because he would not denounce his belief in Christianity. He was considered an open enemy to Rome, and to their gods. When they took him to kill him, Cyprian said, “thanks be to God.” During third-century crisis, it gave rise to the most vicious persecutions of the Christians. “Rome had grown and covered vast portions of Europe from Great Britain to Spain, from North Africa to Constantinople. Their massive empire angered many but in particular the

⁶ Shanks, “Persecution of Christians.”

Sassanid Empire.”⁷ They wanted a lot of the land back that Rome had taken. Their army was as vast as Rome. They fought for years, but couldn’t defeat Rome alone. Roman civil wars took place approximately in 235-284.

It was a time when the army tried to reassign their own generals. Six army leaders made themselves emperors, calling themselves soldier emperors, and they all killed each other trying to be what they used to be. It was horrid fighting between the armies, and each one thought they represented the real Roman Empire. A divided empire arose in Rome approximately around 260, and for the first time it existed with real opposition, forming three sub empires. The empires started from takeovers from within, crippling the unification of the roman army. The soldier emperors all believed the way to bring Rome back to its greatest height is to reinstall the faith in their style of worship. The armies were heavily devoted to their gods, and one of the ways to unify them was to start global persecution of the Christian faith. They thought their plan would stabilize Roman culture. During the third-century crisis, Christian persecution dramatically increased around the Roman Empire.

“The Decian persecution in 250-251 there was a plague called the Cyprian plague which was some sort of smallpox. It was believed that the reason a plague took place was that the gods would be angered if everyone did not partake in the sacrifices to the gods.”⁸ There was only one group that had issues with sacrificing to other gods, and it was the Christians. When a person would sacrifice, they would receive a receipt or some sort of

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Shanks, “Persecution of Christians.”

certificate. The Christians never possessed the sacrifice, so they were easily detected and persecuted. Some soldiers in the Roman army murdered Pope Fabian. They declared him immoral and beheaded him for not sacrificing to the gods. “Christian persecutions increased again, but only lasted for 13 months because Emperor Decian died and his successor called for the end of the persecution of Christians.”⁹

After some time, Emperor Valerian came to power and believed he was more equipped to regain dominance. He believed he could bridge the gap with the aristocrats. Aristocrats were considered noblemen. Strangely, the armies killed their leaders and declared Valerian emperor. They thought he led with the best hope to get Rome out of its crisis. He quickly went to war to convince the empire. He attempted to take back land Rome lost completely from different kingdoms. He was successful for a while, but later embarrassed, captured, and served as another king’s footstool for the rest of his life.

“In the year 257 Valerian sent a letter to the Roman senate that Christians could no longer own property, could have no aristocratic rank, could not serve in the royal court, and also called for their banishment.”¹⁰ Christians believed it was at least better than death, but a year later Valerian changed his mind. He called for their death because banishment was not enough. Any Christians found in the royal household were to be shipped off as slaves. It is believed by some scholars that Christians were on the rise, and no longer at the bottom of the barrel. A number of Christians caved in the face of the Roman threat, but there were many that did not believe in death. The church went

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Shanks, “Persecution of Christians.”

through a number of changes like those who gave up the faith. Could they be restored because they were scared? This was a crisis within itself. They looked into Peter, who denied Christ, and realized that he was restored, so they had to create a way to keep those who were afraid to die in the faith. Regardless if the crisis was within the faith or upon the faith, the body of Christ possessed a resiliency to rise that constantly kept oppressors in awe.

“Although the Roman Empire persecuted Christianity for a long time, it could not break the faith of Christians. Christians preached the gospel without fear or hesitation even though they were burned at the stake, eaten by wild beasts in the amphitheaters, and killed by terrible torture. Their faith was like a myrrh tree that emits a more beautiful fragrance when it is cut. Despite severe persecution, the number of Christians increased and the gospel spread more vigorously throughout the Roman Empire and the entire Mediterranean coast.”¹¹

Bishop Polycarp of Smyrna

Bishop Polycarp was the first Bishop of Smyrna. He was a disciple of the Apostle John. Polycarp was one of the last in-person contacts of the twelve that followed Jesus Christ. He was a significant figurehead in the church of the Lord. He was a martyr. A martyr is a person that dies for their faith. Many died by whippings, wild beasts in arenas, tormented, and burned alive. He was one of many that would not renounce their faith in the face of opposition. He lived to be 86 years old, and many wondered how he lived so long during the oppressive hand of the Romans. The Romans were always in pursuit to find believers in Christ and normally were captured before the age of Polycarp. Polycarp was the last remainder of men who walked physically with Jesus. He himself did not

¹¹ Ahn Sahnghong, “Roman Persecution of Christians: The Cause, Reason, and Details of 10 Great Persecutions,” accessed December 20, 2022, <https://ahnsahnghong.com/en/church-of-god/persecution-in-the-roman-empire/#:~:text=Ten%20Great%20Roman%20Persecutions%20of%20Christians%20>.

walk with Jesus, but he did walk with one who did. “This is one of the reasons he was greatly revered as a teacher and a church leader.”¹²

Bishop Polycarp discovered the Romans were after him and he was persuaded to leave for a nearby country. While he was away, he spent his time consecrating himself to God. He would always pray for the people and the many Christian churches. “Three days before his arrest he had a vision of the pillow under his head in flames, and he said to those that were with him, I will be burnt alive.”¹³ When the Roman officials arrived at his whereabouts, Polycarp went with them without resisting. The officials were amazed that the man that they had been looking for had caused so much ruckus because of his age. When they grabbed him, he asked for food and time to pray. His prayer lasted for two hours without ceasing, and it amazed the Roman officials, so much so that they were convicted about arresting him. When returning to Rome for Polycarp to face judgment, they asked him to denounce Christ. Polycarp said, “86 years have I served him, and he has done me no wrong. How can I blaspheme my King and my Savior?”¹⁴

They proceeded to ask him multiple times and began to share with him the types of punishment he would endure. One was to be eaten by the wild beast in the colosseum, the other was to be burned alive. Polycarp responded valiantly by saying, “Your fire burns for an hour, but there is a fire for you that will burn for eternity.” He proceeded to pull off his sandals, and this was an extraordinary moment because he was so revered that

¹² J.B. Lightfoot, *The Martyrdom of Polycarp*, ed. Dan Graves, “Polycarp’s Martyrdom,” Christian History Institute, accessed December 20, 2022, <https://christianhistoryinstitute.org/study/module/polycarp>.

¹³ Lightfoot, Dan Graves, “Polycarp’s Martyrdom.”

¹⁴ Lightfoot, Dan Graves, “Polycarp’s Martyrdom.”

his students would remove them for him. Polycarp removed his sandals and walked barefoot into the colosseum bravely. The soldiers asked him repeatedly to say “Down with the atheist.” This statement was in reference to Jesus. They wanted to make a point that Jesus himself was not real. Polycarp responds and says, “How can I repent from what is good and turn to what is evil?” They continued and told him, we will nail you to the cross, and Polycarp said to them no need to nail him, God is with him. He walked toward the fire with his hands tied. They set him on fire and he did nothing but pray while he was in the fire.

The story is told that his skin did not melt, nor did it smell as if he was being burned but rather that he cooked like bread in an oven. The scene was said to be glorious and caused one of the soldiers to say, I want what he has. Many leaders have suffered at the hands of oppressors, and that oppression is a crisis. Though numerous assaults have come against the leaders of the church, it has still survived for hundreds of years. Many martyr’s deaths contributed to the increase of the Christian faith. Bishop Polycarp’s life and stance against the Romans ignited believers, and even a Roman oppressor, to want the fire that burned within him. The fire that burned him externally was surely tormenting, but the fire internally held Polycarp together in the midst of a crisis that had no return.

William Seymour and Azusa

William Joseph Seymour was the son of freed slaves. He was born in 1870 in Centreville, Louisiana five years after the complete emancipation of slaves. His family was poor, and he was reared in the center of institutional racism as well as among the KKK. While he was one generation removed from slavery himself, he was close enough to still see and

experience the vile and vicious behavior of the White race toward Black people. William Seymour was a self-taught man. He taught himself how to read and his schooling was the Bible, in particular, the Black understanding of Christianity. Choosing an interracial Methodist church over an all-Black Methodist church was clearly purposeful, and a clear indication of what his personal ministry would later be modeled after. It seems that Seymour had a vision of whom he wanted to be, and how he wanted to mingle among all kinds of people. “His choice of work in Indianapolis points to the same conclusions, for in large downtown hotel restaurants he met Whites in a surrounding where people spoke to one another.”¹⁵ It was clear that Seymour was drawn to be a part of multicultural circles, and didn’t want to do the obvious and stick with just his own kind.

This type of pursuit to socialize outside of his kind, I attribute his commitment of interracial interest to the ministry of reconciliation. 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 NIV reads:

So, from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. God made him who had no sin to be sin for us so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.¹⁶

It is this pericope that appears to be his motivation. It cannot be explicitly proven, except by the truth that he was biblically self-taught and later enrolled in Parham’s Bible

¹⁵ MacRobert, Iain. *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (Basingstoke, London: Macmillan, 1988) 49.

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:16-21 (New International Version).

school that openly practiced segregation. This case is built upon the restrictions of Parham's class rules and Seymour's natural hunger to be among all kinds. The ministry of reconciliation is about having a restored relationship with God through Jesus, being the message, and speaking the message on earth as ambassadors of Christ. The message of reconciliation is a kingdom message that requires one to be totally brought into grace and mercy in order to walk as Christ, not counting people's sins, omissions, and mistakes against them.

By the time William Joseph Seymour journeys to L.A. to begin what we know as Azusa, his spirit and his nature agreed with his experiences of multicultural ministry and multicultural engagement during those times. This was even evident in the way he seated the people and positioned the seats, as well as the designated area for the pulpit. It was all reconciliation in planning. The author describes it as "one level." Blacks, Whites, and just about every race, nationality, and social class worshiped together and were filled with the spirit together all on one level.¹⁷ The spirit of God was the barrier breaker for race and sex. "Mattie Cummings reported that at Azusa everybody was just the same. It didn't matter if you were black, white, or grizzly. There was a wonderful spirit. Germans and Jews, Black and Whites, ate together in a little cottage at the rear. Nobody ever thought of color."¹⁸

This man, William Seymour, who was self-taught and spirit-led, partnered with Florence Crawford & Clara Lum, a white missions administrator and editor, to start a

¹⁷ MacRobert, Iain. *The Black Roots and White Racism of Early Pentecostalism in the USA* (Basingstoke, London: Macmillan, 1988) 54.

¹⁸ MacRobert, Black Roots, 56.

newspaper called “The Apostolic Faith.” Estrela Alexander points out in her book, *Black Fire*, that “this newspaper proved to many that Seymour wasn’t illiterate, demonstrating his detailed sermons and articles written by him... The newspaper’s reach grew to well over 50,000 copies in two years.”¹⁹ They had become international, reaching well over 50 nations and in addition a local and national mailing list. The movement was spreading like wildfire across the world. The local news, and this list, were very important tools that promoted the movement. The local news would report about the revival sarcastically, humorously, and critically. Estrela adds headlines as such, “weird babel of tongues among people who practice the most fanatical rites, preach the weirdest theories, and work themselves into a state of trance in their peculiar zeal.”²⁰ These types of articles by news reporters helped promote the movement whether by skepticism or serious interest; it brought attention to the revival.

The newspaper however, written by Lum and Seymour, documented real activity happening during the services such as miracles, healings, deliverance, baptisms of the spirit, tongues, interpretation of tongues, sermons, songs, and stories, corrections of heretical teachings and other revival sites. It was four pages long of eyewitness information that took place during the revival services. The list was taken by Clara Lum when she decided to leave Azusa and follow Florence Crawford to Oregon. Their departure, along with the mailing list, cut off the outside world for William Seymour. Giving and interest in the ministry were severely impacted by their decision to leave the

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Alexander, Estrela Y. *Black Fire: One Hundred Years of African American Pentecostalism*. (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2011) 120.

movement. The ministry without these lists deflated the influence of William Seymour. There were twenty-two lists used to send the newspaper, and as it was with William Seymour, it is with us today. Although the taking of the list changed everything for William Seymour and the movement, we must ask the question: what does the spirit have to say about the taking of the list? The loss of the list brought about challenges that are worth exploring.

Let's examine the list, the leader, and the spirit. The list was today's social media, website, and constant contact. With Seymour being limited to only a few local lists, his support financially and publicly decreased. Without the Apostle Paul's letters to the different destinations in the scriptures, like Galatia, Corinth, Rome, Philippi, and even Philemon, we would have no insight into what God was doing in those areas. The list was the vehicle by which communication was made readily available. Without the word, we have no faith, for faith comes from hearing the word of God. God invited Moses up the mountain to give him an instruction regarding the tabernacle, the ark of the covenant, as well as the Ten Commandments. Without the information from God to Moses, the people of God wouldn't have the instructions to provide the will of God on earth. All the instructions from God to man were a peek into the supernatural; how God would bless and create spiritual culture. When Moses broke them on the people the first time because of anger, it was a picture of a list just etched in stone, but completely lost. When Moses destroyed the list the first time, he had to go back to God but write the list for himself. Lost time, plus lost list, equals more energy exerted. More for Moses, and so it was for Seymour. The list wasn't just support and influence; it was also souls, connection, and people that had been affected by his ministry. People often pay little to no attention to

how losing people, influence, finance, and close friends in ministry affects Pastors. These are all issues that have led to depression for Pastors, and even giving in to suicide. “When pastors fail to live up to demands imposed by themselves or others, they often turn their frustration back on themselves, leading to self-doubt and to feelings of failure and hopelessness,” said Fred Smoot, executive director of Emory Clergy Care.²¹ No one really knows the amount of pressure or pain that pastors carry while trying to please God and care for his people. One misstep can bankrupt a pastor of everything he or she has worked so hard for. Losing the list was the beginning of the downslide for Seymour and the Azusa revival. One would think that having the power of God at that level would be all you need, but as we can clearly see, the marketing behind the power has its effect that highlights what the power can do in the recipient’s life as well as being a contributor to it:

The likelihood is that one out of every four pastors is depressed,” said Matthew Stanford, a professor of psychology and neuroscience at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. Anxiety and depression in the pulpit are “markedly higher” in the last five years. The current economic crisis has caused many of our pastors to go into depression. Besides the recession’s strain on church budgets, depressed pastors increasingly report frustration over their congregations’ resistance to cultural change. Most depression does not lead to suicide, but almost all suicides begin with depression. Depression causes two-thirds of the 30,000 suicides reported each year, the AMA says. Nearly two out of three depressed people don’t seek treatment, according to studies by the Depression and Bipolar Support Alliance. Counselors say even fewer depressed ministers get treated because of career fears, social stigma, and spiritual taboos Clergy does not talk about it because it violates their understanding of their faith. They believe they are not supposed to have those kinds of thoughts.²²

²¹ Greg Warner, “When Pastors’ Silent Suffering Turns Tragic,” *The Presbyterian Outlook*, November 30, 2009, <https://pres-outlook.org/2009/11/when-pastors-silent-suffering-turns-tragic/>.

²² Warner, “Silent Suffering.”

These statistics are interesting and raise the question what the statistics would be if there were studies during Seymour's time. He went from being one of the most influential pastors, to death with what they believe to have been a broken heart. If dying from a broken heart isn't the deepest level of depression, I don't know what is. William Seymour would show up to services and most of the pastors on the stage wouldn't honor him, some would nod at him, and others would act as if he wasn't even in the room. The White race, that he worked so hard to learn to converse with, abandoned him from Crawford, Lum, Parham, Bartleman, and Durham; they tried to split the movement. In the face of all the betrayal and desertion, he remained in great character.

We must deal with why the list was taken and the departure of the first wave of Whites, including Lum and Crawford. Estrela writes that Seymour married a Black woman by the name of Jennie Moore at a small private ceremony. When he introduced his wife to the writing team, Crawford believed Seymour had compromised holiness. She felt that marriage would hold up and even stunt their evangelism efforts. The fact that he also had written harsh articles in their newspaper about marriage and divorce didn't benefit him at all. His own perspective helped shape the mindset that Crawford possessed. He later wrote that telling someone not to marry was against the will of God. He suffered from his own hard doctrine and limited grace. Lum, on the other hand, left because she didn't like the fact that he married someone else. She and Seymour supposedly had a very deep friendship; more aptly what we could speculate as a relationship. It is reported in *Black Fire* that William Seymour and Charles Mason had a conversation regarding Seymour marrying Lum, and Mason told him not to or it would destroy the ministry. He listened to Charles Mason, and instead married Jennie Moore.

Lum was furious and obviously hurt, and decided to leave to follow Crawford to Oregon. Something in Lum shattered, and the fact that Crawford had already quit, gave way to an easy breakaway. Moore was described as a Black woman who didn't really get along with White people, so there was always some form of tension, whether concealed or out in the open. Their decision to marry, coupled with her perceived persona by White people, made it difficult for them to remain in comfort. Lum and Crawford leaving was a blow to the marketing of the ministry, and the rumor of Seymour compromising caused a rippling effect in the White community within the church.

There was an unidentified ethical erosion happening. The relationship between Seymour and Moore seemed to have appeared out of nowhere, surprising core people within the ministry. The reaction from Lum breathed more than the typical ministerial relationship. Perhaps it was inevitable, but the abrupt response to his marriage spoke louder than their partnership. Maybe he should've listened to love and ignored Charles Mason because marrying the Black woman did more than kill his ministry, it ended his influence while he was living. Eventually, he died of a broken heart from the demise of his ministry. One can't help but wonder, was some of that brokenness from the residue of not marrying Lum and settling for Moore? How many ministries have gone under because of a relationship gone wrong? The answer is countless. It's plausible that his inability to be forthright with Lum, and even himself, created an unhealthy and unethical issue that ultimately spawned a never-ending avalanche.

This was very unfortunate, and Seymour did his best to retrieve the list from Lum. He ultimately realized that a Black man taking a White woman to court would be a guaranteed loss, and cause severe damage to his reputation. It is also rather interesting

that Jesus had many women to fund and follow his ministry. They stayed with him through Calvary, and were among the first to see him at his resurrection. He met the woman at the well and prophesied to her things she only knew. She, in return, went and evangelized to her community. He saved a woman caught in the very act of adultery. He couldn't stop rumors, but he established relational boundaries that had to be respected. His messages matched his intentions, revealing to us how to handle those of the opposite sex that work with us. Hebrews 4:15 says, "For we have not a high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin."²³ Scripture informs us that despite what might have been rumored about him and women, he remained without sin.

What does the spirit have to say about this list? Even though Seymour's marriage hurt Lum, and Lum's departure hurt Seymour and the ministry, what was the Holy Spirit's role in the matter? When Lum left, the letters were still going out but not describing an LA experience. She did not inform the readers until a year later, however, Pentecostalism was spreading all over the world. Could it be that maybe God was ready to move somewhere else and that the revival was never supposed to be a church, but a moment to spark a movement in the earth? When Jesus came to the world he didn't come to stay. His assignment was for 33 years. After Jesus completed his assignment he said, in John 14:16-19:

And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you forever—the Spirit of truth. The world cannot receive Him, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you do know Him, for He abides with you and will be in

²³ Hebrews 4:15 (New King James Version).

you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. In a little while the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you also will live.²⁴

Jesus left the disciples, and explained that he wouldn't leave them as orphans. Orphans are children who have no father originally, and then the definition later expanded to include both father and mother. The feeling of abandonment, loneliness and dismay is running through the minds of the disciples. They had to get over Jesus leaving them by way of death, by way of ascension to heaven, yet regardless of why He left they were human; they had to learn how to adjust after His departure. The difference between Jesus' departure and Lum's is that Jesus sent another helper. Lum didn't. Jesus was the first helper and he assures the disciples that another is coming to be with them forever. He would teach them and guide them.

The spirit of God didn't come to be contained but rather to give itself freely to humanity. Acts 1:8 in the Pentecostal church focuses on the word power in the verse: "But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."²⁵ Being a witness of God is the power in this verse. A witness is more influential, more believable, and has more credibility to spread what needs to be known. Jesus was very intentional about the movement scattering. He scattered the disciples when he sent them out two by two. He scattered them again when he commissioned them in Matthew 28:19,

²⁴ John 14:16-19 (New International Version).

²⁵ Acts 1:8 (New International Version).

“Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.”²⁶

It is the scattering of God that spread the good news to the world through men of God. It was the same scattering of God that dismantled the unity of men without God at the tower of Babel. In Genesis chapter 11:8-9, the people were all on the same page so much so that they would have constructed a tower to make a name for themselves. “So, the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. That is why it was called Babel because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.”²⁷ God had something else to say regarding their plans. Just as William Seymour had plans, the people working on the tower did as well. When the Spirit wants to do something other than what we people want to do, we can either embrace him, disobey him, or go and find out what he wants to do and obey him. God often moves in the strangest scenarios. It could be that the Spirit used the altercation with Lum and Seymour to spread the message more; ending one season to start another.

The loss of the list, the wounds of the leader, and the uncontrollability of the spirit all played a role in discovering what was next for the movement and for William Seymour. Discovering what was next required a challenge that didn’t go over very well for him and the Azusa mission. So, as it was for Seymour, so it is for us. Church, as it is known today, has changed significantly because of the challenges of Covid-19. Not being

²⁶ Matthew 28:19 (New International Version).

²⁷ Genesis 11:8-9 (New International Version).

able to worship together over a years' time was difficult within itself. Many believers' walk with God had its own set of challenges with their commitment to God and His church; not knowing what the whole future was regarding the church. Could God have used this virus to scatter the church beyond church addresses and into additional sacred spaces? Was the loss of the list an act of God? Seymour's challenge with the loss of the list and today's challenge with meeting the needs of the church in a Covid era has made "creating community" very difficult.

The Covid era highlighted the virtual church and it exploded for some; for some that didn't have great streaming or valuable support teams to run/operate, it struggled. The Christian Post addressed this in an article saying, "As many as one in five churches could permanently close as a result of shutdowns stemming from the coronavirus pandemic, according to David Kinnaman, president of the Barna Group."²⁸ The Barna group also revealed that there are three pursuits pastors and their congregations will need to engage in to move forward post-pandemic.

Reset: What culture and faith trends have emerged as a result of the pandemic?

Refocus: How can we leverage the digital landscape to make resilient disciples?

Restore: How is God forming us to be more humble, resilient, and dependent on him?²⁹

Bishop Desmond Tutu

²⁸ Michael Gryboski, "1 in 5 churches facing permanent closure within 18 months due to COVID-19 shutdowns: Barna pres.," *The Christian Post*, August 26, 2020, <https://www.christianpost.com/news/1-in-5-churches-face-closure-within-18-months-due-to-covid-19-shutdowns-barna-president.html>.

²⁹ Barna Group, "Five Things We've Learned during the COVID-19 Crisis," *Barna*, May 13, 2020, <https://www.barna.com/research/things-we-learned/>.

Bishop Desmond Tutu was one of the most powerful black leaders to walk the earth. He was a great man, a family man, a man of God, a man of peace; an educated man. He eventually became the leading spokesperson for the rights of South Africans. During the 1980's he drew immense attention from the world regarding the iniquities of apartheid. In the face of the ill-treatment of the black South African people Bishop Tutu's flame was never extinguished, instead, the fire of his spirit was fueled by it to fight the evil system of the apartheid. Apartheid loomed as "a former policy of segregation and political, social, and economic discrimination against the non-White majority in the Republic of South Africa."³⁰ "Reconciliation and justice were key words for Desmond Tutu. Throughout his lifetime, he tried to educate South Africans to strive for reconciliation instead of revenge, and for justice rather than retribution."³¹

Desmond Tutu was born October 7, 1931, in Klerksdorp, South Africa. Two generations before his birth, Klerksdorp was a prosperous gold mining town, but by the time of Bishop Tutu's birth, it was in very harsh conditions. Bishop Tutu grew up multiethnic. His father, mother, and grandmother were from different tribes and all spoke different languages. He would later learn to speak a total of eight languages. Bishop Tutu's home life amplified his ability to learn different languages easily. His father was an elementary school principal, and his mother was a cook and cleaner at a school for the blind. Bishop Tutu was born into the world during the great depression. Mpilo, which is his middle name, means life: it means a joyful child. His family moved to Johannesburg,

³⁰ Miriam-Webster Dictionary, s. v. "Apartheid," accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/apartheid>.

³¹ Samuel Willard Crompton, *Desmond Tutu: Fighting Apartheid (Modern Peacemakers)*, (New York, NY: Chelsea House Publications, 2007), 3.

where he contracted tuberculosis when he was a teenager. The disease was a great killer in those years, but the doctors caught it early enough to administer a plan for treatment. The young Desmond Tutu would spend a year and a half in a hospital to recover.

His experience enthused him to become a medical doctor and find a cure for tuberculosis. A British Priest named Father Trevor Huddleston greatly influenced Bishop Tutu at a young age. Father Huddleston was born in 1913. He came from a distinguished family and became a priest in 1936. In 1943 he decided to go to South Africa to minister to the needs of the Anglican mission community around Johannesburg. He walked around the black townships at night without fear and in the early 1950's he led the fight to keep a black township called Sophia town. He worked in both Britain and central African nations exposing the ills of the apartheid. Father Huddleston wrote a book entitled *Not for Your Comfort* to disclose to the rest of the world what the government was allowing to happen to South African blacks. When Bishop Desmond Tutu was a twelve-year-old boy he witnessed Father Huddleston take off his hat out of reverence to his mother. Young Tutu had never seen a white man show respect to his mother. Father Huddleston remembered hearing feet hurrying to play and crowd themselves up against him as he walked through the neighborhood and one of those children was Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Desmond Tutu graduated high school in 1950 and was accepted into medical school. His family could not afford the cost of medical school, but he accepted an educational scholarship at Pretoria Bantu Normal College to study education. Bishop Tutu graduated with a teacher's certificate. Bishop continued and received a bachelor's degree from the University of South Africa. He returned to his high school alma mater to

teach English, but three years later he walked away from teaching because of the Bantu Education Act. It lowered the standards of education for black South Africans to guarantee that they would not learn knowledge beyond a life of servitude. Bishop Tutu was ordained an Anglican deacon and one year later as a priest. In his position as an important member of the clergy, he used his influence to speak bravely against the apartheid. The apartheid had been in place since 1948 and he was annoyed by the inequality and injustice in the motherland. Desmond Tutu became the most visible South African person familiar to people around the world. He was committed to nonviolence and did not promote the use of weapons. He led the non-violent fight for many years and risked his life many times. In 1976 Bishop wrote an open letter to the prime minister of South Africa about race relations, pleading with him to act because the evil system of apartheid had gotten out of control. Below is an actual copy of the letter Bishop Tutu wrote:

I am writing to you, sir, because I know you to be a loving and caring father and husband, a doting grandfather who has experienced the joys and anguish of family life, its laughter and gaiety, its sorrows and pains. I am writing to you, sir, as one who is passionately devoted to a stable and happy family life as the indispensable foundation of a sound and healthy society. I am writing to you, sir, as one who is a member of a race that has known what it has meant in frustrations and hurts, in agony and humiliation, to be a subject of people. The history of your own race speaks eloquently of how utterly impossible it is, when once the desire for freedom and self-determination is awakened in a people, for it to be quenched or to be satisfied with anything less than freedom and that self-determination³²

Bishop Tutu wrote his letter to John Vorster the Prime Minister because he thought he as an Afrikaner would empathize with the black South Africans because the Afrikaners had to fight the British for their freedom. Bishop Tutu would stand

³² Crompton, *Desmond Tutu*, 1-2.

courageously and declare openly how the policy of apartheid affected the blacks, mixed, and Indians. The blacks had it worse than all three being the only group that had to have a passbook to travel. This was not like a passport to leave the country, it was a pass to move around town. Blacks had certain areas that they were permitted to be in and any other area demanded the proper paperwork or was jailed. This would put you in mind of being in school and needing a hall pass to go to the restroom. The treatment was so belittling by an ethnic group that was the minority. The whites were the minority in South Africa, but because they were so heavily armed the blacks only had small violent battles against them from time to time. The Black South Africans were outgunned. Bishop Tutu never tried to use tactics to retaliate, instead, he pursued reconciliation. He not only loved his people, but he also loved his country.

Peace and an overall sense of justice were of great importance to him.

“Reconciliation and justice were key words for Desmond Tutu. Throughout his lifetime, he tried to educate South Africans to strive for reconciliation instead of revenge, and for justice rather than retribution”³³ The Prime Minister believed that Bishop Tutu’s letter was just a political show and did not believe a word he wrote. White South Afrikaners did not believe that black South Africans were civil or peaceful so living in harmony was not even an option. The riot in Soweto would start to open the eyes of the world to the apartheid. Unfortunately, lives would be lost. However, in the crisis, an opportunity for assistance began to be a real possibility. Soweto was a township in Johannesburg, South Africa that was occupied by over 750,000 Blacks. They were minding their own business until an announcement went out about blacks being forced to learn the Afrikaner

³³ Crompton, *Desmond Tutu*, 3.

language. This upset the blacks because they did not want to learn the language of the people that continued to oppress them. The students went out into the streets and began throwing rocks at the police and they responded by firing their guns at the students.

The government accompanied the police, and they both fired live rounds on many young people. It was a massacre. This crisis got the attention of America and other countries. It eventually caused economic problems for South Africa when other countries stopped doing business because of the ill-treatment of the Afrikaans towards other races. Protests began and they increased in strength, getting stronger and stronger. You had the peaceful protest as well as the birth of the more militant approach of Nelson Mandela and The African National Congress, ANC.

Overtime, Desmond Tutu faced an enduring inner crisis from his people labeling him a sellout because he left South Africa and went to London because of job opportunities. This allowed him to escape the ill treatment of apartheid. It also allowed his children to attend private schools. He eventually returned due to the death of Steven Biko. At his funeral, he believed something was calling him back home. As time went forward he grew stronger in popularity, won the Nobel Peace prize, and became general secretary of the Anglican Church. He rose to prominence around the world and yet would run into a riot to stop any form of violence. He began to ask for South African leaders to be released from prison and one of those leaders was Nelson Mandela. He was in prison on Robin Island for 27 years. With the leadership of Desmond Tutu and Prime Minister Botha, whom both knew it was time for racial equity, they worked together to get Mandela released. Meanwhile, violence increased within tribes and also with the White

and Black. When the 1994 election came, everything changed, and there was a Black candidate against a White candidate. Mandela won, and Bishop Tutu's remarks are as followed:

Yes, our first election turned out to be a deeply spiritual event, a religious experience, a Transfiguration experience, and, a mountaintop experience. We had won a spectacular victory over injustice, oppression, and evil. Friendship, laughter, joy, caring, all of these were impossible for us as one nation, and now here we were, coming from all the different tribes and languages, diverse cultures and faith, so, utterly improbable, we were becoming one nation.³⁴

This was a great day for South Africa and Bishop Tutu. Everything he had fought for manifested on this day! He was fueled with hope throughout the Apartheid and even afterward as more crises continued. His flame never went out until he passed away.

Chapter Summary

The Christian church and many of its deceased leaders endured much persecution. While the church was born from persecution, most of its high-profile leaders made waves in their era because of them. Persecution has a way of revealing what is inside a man. The founder, Jesus Christ was publicly persecuted and punished by death on a cross. The cross, death, and crises seemed to have made the Christianity more attractive to other unbelievers seeing how so many were willing to die for what they believed. "Christian persecution can include a wide variety of responses to believers—from scorn, hatred, and ridicule to physical violence, imprisonment, and death. But for such opposition, no matter

³⁴ Crompton, *Desmond Tutu*, 3.

how mild or severe, to be regarded as persecution in the biblical sense, it must be provoked by the believer's devotion to Jesus Christ and his righteousness.”³⁵

This chapter demonstrated how historical figures kept their faith and fought for what they believed. Their lives were on the line daily and yet they remained confident in their faith in the face of uncertainty. William Seymour endured and excelled during racism. He kept the faith when it finally raised its ugly head in the Azusa movement. Bishop Polycarp walked for Jesus until death and wasn't threatened by Roman pursuit. His death confounded soldiers and created more hunger for Jesus in the body of Christ. The Romans persecuted Christians for years but they could not kill off the faith. Bishop Desmond Tutu stood for his people so powerfully that he got the world's attention regarding the evil system of apartheid in South Africa. Every leader in this chapter had a flame that could not be quenched by the crisis they faced. Each of them used the persecution they faced as fuel to keep their fire for change burning.

³⁵ Tom Ascol, “What is Religious Persecution?,” Ligonier Ministries, July 25, 2015, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/what-christian-persecution>.

Chapter Four

Leadership in Crisis

Overview

Creativity has evolved in the church throughout the years. During the early years, creativity was designated for Holiday services only, like Christmas and Easter. It was quite common to see nativity scenes during Christmas at any church on any corner, and the traditional three crosses symbolizing the crucifixion of Jesus Christ for Easter. Over time, some variation of props, screens, lighting, creative stage designs, light shows, smoke machines, and more became the common standard in most churches. When Covid-19 interrupted the world, it also interrupted what had become common or relevant for the church. Many churches and leaders had to go back to the drawing board on how to do church effectively in an era it had never seen before. Without an audience, the church world began looking for answers, and this problem opened the door for new ways to communicate the gospel message. Social media became the new church. “Social media is amplifying our voice to reach more people than ever before in history.”¹

The chapter will explore how social media expanded the reach of the church, challenged the church, and challenged its leadership to stay relevant. For some ministries, social media was already a supporting tool and needed to be boosted, and for others, it was a complete stranger delivering mixed emotions. This chapter will share insights on how leaders adjusted to the new norm during Covid and the digital rise. “Social media

¹ Mark Forrester, *Trending Up: Social Media Strategies for Today's Church*, (Springfield, MO: Salubris Resources, 2017). 24.

offers tools to share your church's news, but more importantly it gives you the potential to reach hundreds or even thousands of people who may never step foot inside the doors of your church."²

The Leader's Responsibility in Crisis

The Oxford dictionary defines leadership as "the action of leading a group of people or an organization."³ Action is necessary for the advancement of any individual or institution. If there is no advancing without action, it stands to reason that leading is the epitome of moving. Stagnate leaders are those exemplifying little to no movement while advancing leaders operate as if their world is driven to action. Flexible leaders are stable, and stability is a conglomeration of abilities, assignments, the consciousness to stay current, and the nerve to be innovative in your work. Constant focus, and the fight of a challenger in search of a championship, are necessary if a leader is to survive in an ever-evolving world. Whether it is internal or external, good leaders are driven.

Leaders who have a strong work ethic that matches their appetite for success will move hell to see their dream become reality. The suffix "ship" intimates that the makeup of a leader is greater than themselves and intentionally progressive. The leader "ship" DNA carries its people, product, provision, potential, and so much more. John Quincy Adams said, "If your action inspires others to dream more, learn more, do more, and

² Forrester, *Trending Up*, 20.

³ *New Oxford Dictionary of English*, s. v. "leadership," accessed July 11, 2021, www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/leadership.

become more, you are a leader.”⁴ A true leader influences and empowers the leadership within those beside or beneath them to be more. In the introduction of *Responsible Leadership and Global and Contextual Ethical Perspectives* Stückleberger and Mugambi state that, “leaders act in a responsible way and that responsibility is directly related to responsiveness.”⁵ They further say that “the leader is responsible when he or she is responsive to the needs, concerns, and interest of those whom one aspires to lead.”⁶ If you peek into the leadership of the previous presidency of Donald Trump, there is a pristine view of the connection between responsiveness to responsibility. Responsibility is the task to deal with something, and responsiveness is reacting quickly and positively. The two, when interwoven, produce stellar leadership behavior. Depending on political party lines, you may be wondering why to choose the former president as an example. The former president, Donald Trump, had a way of using his office, his power, and his influence on a particular type of citizen that wholeheartedly demonstrated the connection between responsibility and responsiveness in certain areas. While politically one disagreed with him and his shenanigans, he moved his agenda for his people, causing them to fight tooth and nail to keep him in office, even if that meant breaching the nation's Capital.

The party group moved into volatile, lawless action, televised; posted digital recordings and statements that were all actionable results of a leader’s behavior. One

⁴ Christopher Levy, “Construction or Demolition,” *General Leadership*, February 28, 2019, <https://generalleadership.com/tag/maxwell/>.

⁵ Christoph Stückleberger and Jesse N.K. Mungambi, *Responsible Leadership, Vol. 1: Global and Contextual Ethical Perspectives* (Geneva, Globethics, 2007) 1.

⁶ Stückleberger and Mugambi, 1.

must not expect responsible leadership from someone who does not live a responsible life, but who draws the line on what is responsible. The definition that is given towards leadership is about the needs and concerns of those that one aspires to lead, and that could be a small subculture within the nucleus of the overall assignment. While what is responsible may have its obscurity, responsiveness is quite clear. It is all about how swift the response is to the responsibility. The former president did not demonstrate that he was a responsible leader to his entire assignment, but his responsiveness revealed exactly where it was significant. His leadership style displayed the connection of responsibility and responsiveness during his term. It was not for his total responsibility, but rather his preference. A leader's actions affect the destiny of his or her organization obviously; maintaining respectability strengthens credibility. The old adage, "actions speak louder than words" still carries weight. A credible leader and a credible organization are a byproduct of the responsible actions of leadership. Credibility is power alone. Rick Warren said, "The most essential quality for leadership is not perfection but credibility. People must be able to trust you."⁷

Credibility is the quality of being trusted and believed in. Trust catapults a leader's credibility, and the power therein is believability. When a leader leads and the leadership team believes, barriers become testimonies, betrayers become bygones, doubters disappear, and playmakers make more plays. Leaders have to remain purpose-driven in the areas of imperfection, be disciplined enough to keep from losing the credibility established, and understand that perfection is impossible for any leader, but the

⁷ Rick Warren, *The Purpose Driven Life: What on Earth am I Here For?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Zondervan).

purpose is primary for all. Purpose keeps a leader working and work produces the leader's potential. Leading itself is a daunting task, but leading from the front is leading and possessing an ownership mentality. It is exactly what it is, not just being visible, but being seen as the example of what you desire to see from those that follow you. Standing out clearly is tougher than it looks. The leader lays the groundwork out front for what his or her plan is to be. Leading from the front starts with the leader individually, physically, but it graduates to a systemic approach for a better perspective. When the shift happens from physical placement to systematic positioning, the personnel hired or volunteering takes on the main leader's role to carry on the organization. The leader that was once out in front physically, has an organization that flows from the vision of the one that was out in front. Leading from the front is one of the greatest ways to begin something when it comes to leading anything, but it should evolve into the team leading out front for more effective results. A few synonyms for leading are guidance and principals. Any organization would want guidance and principles out front to establish culture, values, and rules. Leading out front is primary even if it's through teams and strategy it should always be out front. One cannot help but wonder if there was a connection between the breach of the capital on January 6th 2021, and the effects of Covid-19 on the psyche of those that scaled the walls. No one would dare to attempt a criminal act such as this until one researched it. The nation's capital had been breached six times.

Not long after construction ended on the U.S. Capitol's two wings in 1811, the British Army invaded Washington, D.C. during the War of 1812. British troops partially burned the Capitol on August 24, 1814.

On July 2, 1915, before the U.S. entered World War I, German professor Eric Muentzer exploded a bomb in the reception room of the U.S. Senate, aiming to stop American support of the Allies. On March 1, 1954, four Puerto Rican nationalists shot 30 rounds from semi-automatic pistols from the Ladies' Gallery, a balcony for visitors, of the House of Representatives chamber in the Capitol.

The shooters aimed to advocate for Puerto Rican independence from the U.S. On November 7, 1983, the leftist terrorist group Armed Resistance Unit took responsibility for detonating a bomb in the lobby outside the office of Senate Minority Leader Robert Byrd. The terrorists claimed they intended to protest the invasion of Grenada. On July 24, 1998, Russell Eugene Weston, Jr. burst into the Capitol and opened fire, killing two Capitol Police officers, Jacob Chestnut, and John Gibson. Weston's motives remain unknown and he faced murder charges for the shootings. However, he was committed to a mental institution with paranoid schizophrenia.⁸

Five of the six breaches were enemies of the United States of America. They had their reasons for their behavior, believing this country was an enemy to them. Their psyche was not off or imbalanced. These were war strategies carried out by men who trained for the moment. The breaches were planned conflicts of engagement that were meant to create a crisis. Only one of the six breaches were carried out by a U.S. citizen, and he was committed to a mental institution for mental illness.

Besides the many day-to-day challenges, the lockdown is taking a serious toll on the mental health of people. Restrictions on social interaction, inactive lifestyle, financial uncertainty, and the fear triggered by the COVID-19 pandemic- all of these are causing tremendous psychological distress among people. According to mental health experts, many people are now suffering from anxiety, frustration, panic attacks, loss or sudden increase of appetite, insomnia, depression, mood swings, delusions, fear, and suicidal tendencies. Lockdown has also worsened the condition of people who are already suffering from psychological ailments and those suffering from substance abuse. There has been a massive spike in patients with mental illness since the coronavirus outbreak in the country. Experts are more worried that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) may be a fallout of this crisis. PTSD was also the most common psychiatric disorder to arise after the SARS outbreak.⁹

One cannot be 100% sure, but there seems to be a connection with the trauma experienced from being locked down because of the Covid-19 virus. Could it be that

⁸ World Tribune, "6 Other Times the U.S. Capitol was Breached," Last modified January 8, 2021, <https://www.worldtribune.com/6-other-times-the-u-s-capitol-was-breached/>.

⁹ Longjam Dineshwori, "The Upsides and Downsides of Covid-19 Lockdown," The Health Site, last modified April 23, 2020, <https://www.thehealthsite.com/news/the-upsides-and-downsides-of-covid-19-lockdown-740937/>.

Covid-19 traumatized the mind in such a way, that the mind could have been influenced to commit an act of terrorism in its own country, believing that it had the right to do it? It is a question worth asking, after seeing how the pandemic affected so many people psychologically, spiritually, emotionally, and physically. The former leader of the free world denied the role that his leadership played in the call to action. Whether he spoke the truth or a lie, his leadership was credible enough to his audience that it moved his people group to do the unimaginable. This moment was not a respectable picture of a leader's responsibility in a crisis. "Leaders flourish in times of crisis." – Andrew Wommack. The former president's leadership created a crisis within the crisis the pandemic already formed. Leadership is essential for the survival of any organization. Could it be that because America considers itself a Christian nation not even the crisis formed by its former leader could smother its fire?

The Pew Research new survey found that nearly eight-in-ten people who say the U.S. should be a Christian nation also say the Bible should have at least some influence on U.S. laws, including slightly more than half (54%) who say that when the Bible conflicts with the will of the people, the Bible should prevail.¹⁰

Political Impact

Politics impact leadership of all categories. The Oxford dictionary defines leadership as, "the action of leading a group of people or an organization."¹¹ Action is necessary for the advancement of any individual or institution. A good leader is stable, and stability is a conglomeration of abilities, assignments, the consciousness to stay

¹⁰ Gregory A. Smith, Michael Rotolo, Patricia Tevington, "45% of Americans Say U.S. Should Be a 'Christian Nation,'" Pew Research Center, last modified October 27, 2022, <https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2022/10/27/45-of-americans-say-u-s-should-be-a-christian-nation/>.

¹¹ New Oxford Dictionary of English, s. v. "leadership," www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/leadership (accessed July 11, 2021).

current, and the nerve to be innovative in work. A leader's action affects the destiny of his or her organization. Obviously, maintaining respectability strengthens credibility. A credible leader is a by-product of the responsible actions of leadership. Credibility is power. Pastor Rick Warren says "The most essential quality for leadership is not perfection by credibility. People must be able to trust you."¹²

There are some pastors and governors that have credibility while there are others that don't. Their credibility establishes the level of believability of their constituents as it pertains to the severity of the pandemic. Different governors have made different decisions for their states regarding Covid-19. At one point, we see some restrict gatherings totally, while others limit attendance. With the increase of Covid-19 cases, hospitals become overloaded. Empty beds are hard to come by, and having no available ventilators leads to an increase in the death rate. For this reason, masks serve as the leading preventative method in mitigating this disease. The mask mandate brought to light many political prejudices in the pastoral seat. There are pastors who equated masks to demonic spirituality and an attack against their constitutional rights:

One Tennessee pastor has given his members two options: Come to church masked less or be kicked out. Pastor Greg Locke told members at Global Vision Bible Church in Mount Juliet he will ask anyone with a mask to leave. "... I am not playing these Democrat games up in this church." Locke criticized pastors who have canceled services or held off water baptisms due to the delta variant. He said not only will the church be masked less but members will also not engage in social distancing, local news outlet Lexington Herald reported. "They will be serving Frosty's in hell before we shut this place down, just because a buck wild, demon-possessed government tells us to," Locke said in his Facebook video.

This isn't the first time Locke has spoken out against COVID-19 regulations. The Charlotte Observer reported that Locke said he would rather go to jail than shut

¹² Warren, *Purpose Driven Life*.

down his congregation because of the pandemic. He did eventually close down his church briefly to comply with the guidelines.¹³

Politics and Ecclesia

Politics has been defined as a set of activities that are associated with making decisions in groups, or other forms of power relations among individuals, such as the distribution of resources or status. A political system is a framework which defines acceptable political methods within a society. When politics begin to be discussed, party politics automatically come to the forefront. Party politics is defined as politics that relate to political parties rather than to the good of the general public. These political parties are always divided on key issues. For example, the Democratic, Republican and Independent parties all have different views regarding the Covid-19 outbreak. Covid-19 is exhausting to all parties; the divide that remains is more about how the pandemic will end. The question is, does it end with caution and the ability to keep the virus from spreading, or does it end with the people deciding that the virus will not disrupt their lives?

These political decisions have weighed heavily on the world and the church, just as they have influenced the role of Christianity during the independence of the United States. It is obvious that July 4th represents more than just independence as a country; it is also a symbol of independence in the faith. With the enormous number of immigrants entering the new nation, over time came the traditional belief system of Catholicism. Although small in number at the onset of this new nation, with more French, German,

¹³ Gabriela Miranda, "Tennessee Pastor Tells Members if they Wear a Mask, they will be Kicked out of Church," USA Today, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2021/07/27/tn-pastor-greg-locke-says-masks-arent-allowed-bible-church/5385007001/>.

and English migration into the new territory, Catholicism grows and becomes sizable in scale and impact. In the same way that politics are influential in the growth of Catholicism and the birth of the nation, it also has been at the heart of the institution of slavery. While slavery was an economic booster in the United States for the White man, it was the beginning of poverty and a lack of identity for the African Black man in America. Slavery did not just affect America, it affected Africa. The slaves were Africans that were shipped to America. They were torn from their African families, splitting their families apart, never to see each other again. This means, homes were shattered, families disrupted, and the bread breadwinner forced into absence.

With the African male seized, the economic status of his family was affected. Africa underwent forced change, and the culture of the people suffered because of it. “If you know the beginning well, the end will not trouble you” - A Wolof Proverb.¹⁴ This quote in *The Power of African Cultures* describes the very essence of where African culture. Not knowing the beginning well, is not knowing yourself well. It is not knowing that causes a culture to believe what has been in circulation, without investigation. The trouble with this quote is this: you can know the beginning, and the ending can still trouble you. Even in the context of a robbed culture, knowing the beginning doesn’t guarantee the ending is not troubling you. It is very difficult to identify self, a people group, and even more so an entire continent, especially when so many other multicultural imprints have manipulated the space and opportunity before self-discovery and cultural discovery.

¹⁴ Toyin Falola, *The Power of African Cultures* (Rochester: University of Rochester Press, 2008), 1.

The language of intellectual discourse suggests that there is a big crisis of cultural identity and development. This may imply that a previous identity has been lost or alternatively that none has ever existed. It is true that the rewards of cultural identity are many: they provide a set of values upon which to base policies; the contentment can represent a difference as the basis for dealing with other continents; if the identity comes with dignity, Africa's stature gets enhanced. On the contrary, a lack of identity is worse: the continent remains a mere geographical expression, opens itself up for more cultural bastardization, and exposes its citizens to degradation.¹⁵

Thomas Oden and Toyin Fayola both express the devastation and demoralization of the African people because of colonialism, the slave trade, Islam, and Christianity. The combination of the aforementioned, as well as other countries and their trade routes, have made it difficult for the people of Africa, and Africa itself, to ascend beyond the code word "Black." The word Black today still rings synonymous with unintelligent, inferior, and indigenous in many parts of the world. As the United States begins to emerge, slavery is a constant shadow that remains in the land of the free. Many denominations have been against it, but there are others that don't fight it with their pastors and parishioners who own slaves.

"In 1817 the American Colonization Society was founded with the purpose of buying slaves, freeing them, and returning them to Africa."¹⁶ Society is definitely appreciated, but it doesn't place a dent in the act of slavery. The south has been built off of slavery, and the churches in the south began to preach that slavery has been instituted by God. The Black church is then born from all of the chaos of slave labor in the name of Jesus. Politics is an anchor in all of these things; affecting the birth of the nation,

¹⁵ Falola, *Power*, 53.

¹⁶ Justo L. Gonzalez, *The Story of CHRISTIANITY: The Reformation to the Present Day* (San Francisco: Harper One, 2010), 411.

Catholicism, slavery, and the Black church in the past, as well as pandemic protocols from very recent history to the present with similar emphasis:

On March 13th President Donald Trump declared the novel coronavirus a national emergency, which unlocked billions of dollars in federal funding to fight the disease's spread. On March 13th, The Trump administration issued a travel ban on non-Americans who visited 26 European countries within 14 days of coming to the United States. People traveling from the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland are exempt.¹⁷

California becomes the first state in the US to impose a government lockdown, because of the virus, with several other states to follow. The shutdown is specific to non-essential workers, which then presents the question of what defines essential and non-essential (See Appendix B).

Nonprofit organizations are untaxed organizations that provide mission work for social issues. A social service organization is an organization that helps people deal with problems relating to domestic conflict, adequate housing, mental health, and other personal or family issues. The church falls under the category of both non-profit, and social service organizations. Churches are now faced with the decision to listen to medical professionals, governmental officials, and pastors. All three voices are definitely necessary for a well-rounded view of what the world is going through. The Chief Medical Advisor to the President of the US, Anthony Fauci, oftentimes disagrees with the political direction of the Commander in Chief. What should be medical and public health discussions, have now been hijacked by party politics. While the political direction is the loudest of the three, it becomes difficult for the body of Christ to hear God because of the

¹⁷ American Journal of Managed Care, "Timeline."

war between medicine and government. This new, unique relationship between the three has exposed hidden issues. Government has always been its own world that the church has been separated from, and medicine has always had a unique marriage with mankind, regardless of his or her belief system. The church, on the other hand, is comprised of medicine men and governmental men that house within themselves their own revelations about God.

The church has its own politics within itself. Understanding this, is it a fair question to ask, how does one maintain the political culture of a church? The body of Christ has its own rules, beliefs, and penalties which create this political culture within it. Jesus calls the church “the Ecclesia.” Ecclesia is defined as a called-out body or congregation, and it is commonly translated as the New Testament church. The word Ecclesia has a political connotation. It refers to a gathering of citizens within the city that are called out of the city to discuss legal matters concerning the city. This is the political culture of the church. When the Bible says that we are in this world but not of this world, we are a city set up on a hill, we are the salt of the earth, we are the light of the world, this is the expression of the called-out ones. This is a portrait of God’s people creating His culture in this world; that is the church. The church is supposed to see the world through the lens of scripture. Covid-19 and political decisions began to reveal deep-seated matters within the leaders of the church. It must be said that pastors and leaders are going through the pandemic as well. No one has ever been through what the world has gone through, however, the church has been left with the uncertainty of how to maintain fidelity to its own political culture. What that meant is, whom do we listen to

God, the government, or the doctor? This spawned a major debate in church houses all over the world.

Pastoral Leadership in The Face of Uncertainty

At the height of the pandemic, many pastors were up in the air about how to progress within their ministries and they were looking to prominent pastors like Bishop Thomas Dexter Jakes of the Potter's House in Dallas, Texas. Bishop TD Jakes is known for his thought-provoking sermons and also his transformative leadership style. He led out front and became the voice that the world leaned to during the pandemic. He was repeatedly requested to speak to multiple media outlets i.e. CNN, MSNBC, Fox, etc. Over thirty pastors visited his facility during the pandemic just to witness how he navigated through the uncharted waters. On any given day, you would see a prominent leader or pastor questioning him on what to do next. He released a new book in the middle of the pandemic entitled, *Don't Drop the Mic*.

It was a timely resource, considering he was expounding on how to address multiple audiences from various platforms; at the precise moment, he was addressing the world in the middle of a global crisis. Good pastors do not just lead their congregations, they lead their cities. They are leaders of the community. Bishop TD Jakes was leading the world. He has been, especially during the pandemic, was, the epitome of a leader. Pastoral leadership is necessary for the advancement of the church in the face of certainty as well as uncertainty. A good pastor will do his best to bring clarity during his tenure and especially during any type of crisis. You can only prepare for crises, but you cannot predict them. A real crisis will test the faith of all the people, including the people of God. The leader should consider being more vocal and visible to direct the people of God

through a crisis, not disappear and become visionless in the face of it. The day that the leader decides to be silent about critical issues, and shies away because of fear of the public, he is no longer leading; he or she is in fact being led by the public opinions of naysayers. Leaders create ripple effects. A leader will never please both sides of an issue, so he or she finds a way to meet the need and creates a strategy to navigate the chaos that comes with the choices made. Dr. Valmyr would call this type of leader a visionary leader because they, “visualize, initiate, strategize, institutionalize, and organize to meet needs.”¹⁸ This is what he calls the science of execution. When crises strike the world or the church individually, the vision is the lifesaver and the visionary pushes that life with his or her leadership prowess.

In times of uncertainty and instability, the most important tools are clarity and agility. Crisis rocks our emotions. It blurs our vision and rattles our thinking. In difficulty, people have a greater tendency to react emotionally rather than respond sensibly. This kind of response creates unnecessary chaos. (If you have been to the grocery store recently, you have seen this — why is there no toilet paper?) Mixed messages have led to muddling emotions. Clarity creates calm.¹⁹

A clearly defined and developed vision is necessary at all times, but when the world is threatened with an invisible, adversarial attack such as Covid-19, it is essential that a clarion call for clarity be released. Clarity clears the path and a sense of comfort and direction. It is the quality of being coherent and intelligible; the quality of transparency or purity. Pastors and “church leaders are the mouthpiece of God and the church is the leading voice in the shaping of contemporary leadership values and church

¹⁸ William Valmyr, *The Vanguard Leader: Great Leaders Lead from the Front*, (Oklahoma City, OK: Dust Jacket Press, 2020), 80.

¹⁹ Scott Ridout, “3 Observations About Crisis, Leadership and the Church,” Converge, Accessed December 20, 2022, <https://converge.org/article/3-observations-about-crises-leadership-church>.

culture to be the salt and light of the earth”²⁰ In other words, the church, by intentionality, teaches its followers how to live as a product of kingdom culture in the earth. This culture does not exempt the cohorts of it from calamity, chaos, or crises, but instead postures them for it; creating hallmarks of hope. A leader cannot afford to be voiceless in a crisis, because people depend on their visibility for their rationality and course of action. Pastors are leaders, leaders are people, and people have problems. The crisis that has always existed for the pastor is encapsulated in the question, “Where does he or she go when they are in a crisis?” All crises are not sins, and sin does not disqualify a leader from being a person; instead, it actually affirms a leader’s humanity. The Bible says that God is not a man. He is a spirit. Man will lie, and that is not breaking news. Men, and women of leadership in churches, will lie about their feelings because of the lack of trust and a fear of letting people down:

This week, Barna asked pastors a number of questions relating to how confident they were in leading, including their comfort with publicly admitting to uncertainty during this time. There’s no question on this point: All U.S. pastors agree on some level that “leading my church well through this global crisis means acknowledging that I don’t have all the answers” (72% strongly agree, 26% agree, 1% somewhat agree).

However, when it comes to sharing personal struggles with their congregation, the numbers shift slightly. While the majority of church leaders disagree that their church would lose confidence in them if they admitted to personal struggles related to the current crisis (23% strongly disagree, 43% disagree, 20% somewhat disagree), another one in 10 voices concern about their congregants’ perceptions (2% strongly agree, 1% agree, 10% somewhat agree). Though 85 percent of pastors believe they can be open with their congregation, some feel disclosure of their personal struggles through COVID-19 would be inappropriate (2% strongly agree, 6% agree, and 7% somewhat agree).

[At my church], we believe that authenticity is the highest currency,” says Mike Todd, executive pastor of Transformation Church in Tulsa, Oklahoma. “It’s more valuable than money.... The Church has been so buttoned up for years—

²⁰ William Valmryr, *Vanguard Leader*, 7.

[Christians] want to present a level of excellence that everybody knows is not real, but we still try to somehow keep to this. However, I think that our biggest way to convert people from watchers or viewers to people who partner is authenticity.

Todd concludes, “My encouragement to you is not to shy away from what’s uncomfortable. Remember, growth and comfort are arch-enemies. They never can coexist in the same place. In this season, none of us are comfortable, but that means we’re all growing.”²¹

Between Covid and personal struggles, it is obvious why some pastors walked away from churches right afterward. Some believed this pandemic was the end of an era for them. “A recent survey of Protestant pastors by the research firm Barna Group found that 29% said they had given ‘real, serious consideration to quitting being in full-time ministry within the last year.’”²²

Many pastors were socially ridiculed and verbally abused on social media for not having words of affirmation, and it degraded them, leaving them to feel unappreciated and publicly violated. Many of these pastors and leaders did not believe they were called to anyone outside of their audience. They believed their message focused on those they were assigned. Covid gave them the opportunity to choose if they wanted what was just yesterday’s norm, or today’s immediate future:

The Rev. Kerri Parker, executive director of the Wisconsin Council of Churches, whose member organizations include about 2,000 churches and a million Christians, has been concerned about the stress clergy have been under since 2020. Last summer, the council surveyed clergy and found about a quarter said they were considering retiring or leaving the pastorate due to the stresses of ministry during COVID.²³

²¹ Barna, “Pastors Share Hopes for the Church’s Future after Covid-19,” last modified April 28, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/church-hope-covid/>.

²² Bob Smietana, “For Some Pastors, the Past Year was a Sign that it was Time to Quit,” Religion News, Last modified May 7, 2021, <https://religionnews.com/2021/05/07/for-some-pastors-the-past-year-was-a-sign-that-it-was-time-to-quit/>.

²³ Bob Smietana, “Time to Quit.”

This unexpected change was a crisis within itself for many pastors and leaders. The unannounced shift retired some, redirected others, and left many voiceless in a space that required their leadership. Black pastors in particular were confronted with more pressure, and their crisis was at a threefold minimum. One, Covid was killing Blacks more than any other race. Two, police brutality towards Blacks had escalated. Three, being in America and African or African-descended is a crisis within itself. All three crises rumbled within one Black person, and they were trying to hold on to their faith in the face of uncertainty. Many Black pastors in one denomination died in the faith, not truly understanding the severity of the gathering, and mask mandates in the infancy of the pandemic.

COGIC churches are smaller in size than the average U.S. church, experts say. Like other majority-black institutions, they appear particularly susceptible to the impact of the coronavirus, which has disproportionately affected African Americans. This will change the ecosystem of black church life Butler said. It's showing the inequities of health disparities and economic disparities in the black community. She said through media accounts and hearing from members she has counted 25 to 30 COGIC leaders who contracted the coronavirus and died.²⁴

The coronavirus definitely created a stir in the “Black church,” with “Black leaders” and Black parishioners. With the fear of the unknown, the Black church continued with resilient efforts to do whatever it could to stay relevant and victorious. Resiliency is a must-have if one is going to truly lead valiantly. A Black leader will not survive in any field if he or she does not possess the grit needed to endure cultural imbalances. Resilience itself is rooted in the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties.

²⁴ Michael Boorstein, “Covid-19 has Killed Multiple Bishops and Pastors within the Nation’s Largest Black Pentecostal Denomination,” Washington Post, April 19, 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/religion/2020/04/19/church-of-god-in-christ-pentecostal-coronavirus-kills-bishops/>.

Everyone has the capacity to bounce back from different threats, but bouncing back from being black in a society that castigates, categorizes, and criminalizes takes a lifetime. It creates a different expectation from life within life. It is like having different rules for different people, but expecting them to play the same game, knowing that the rules only benefit one class of participants. This makes life different for Blacks, for no matter what the economic disparities are, Black skin isn't changing and it is a crisis within itself. Racism, discrimination, and slavery shaped the fabric of this perception.

Resilient Leadership

Dr. Olu Menjay orated on resilience in the racial struggle. One of the most striking statements he issued was, “to offer ourselves to service is to offer ourselves to risk our lives to a space of pain, darkness, and the unknown.”²⁵ This phrase alone speaks volumes as it relates to being resilient, but it heightens in intensity when you inject the crisis of racial struggles into the conversation of resilience. The main character of Dr. Olu Menjay's presentation epitomized what it means to be resilient. Alex Cromwell was the central figure in his discussion. He was born on March 3, 1819, to both parents who were emancipated Blacks. Could it be possible that Cromwell's resilience stemmed from the free cognitive state of mind while enduring the high temperatures of racial climates? It would seem that, being reared by a free man and a free woman, his subculture alone would produce a different type of persona. Cromwell desired to attend seminary school in New York, however, he was denied because of the color of his skin. This is a clear example of different rules for different people. He redirected, and studied on his own

²⁵ Dr. Olu Manjay, presentation on Resilience in Racial Struggle, 2022.

with other ministers when he moved to England. Since he couldn't go to school in New York, he went to Cambridge and was the first Black person to graduate in 1853 with his bachelor's degree. His pursuit to go to school and pastor always stayed in his heart, regardless of the space he was in, or rejected from. Rejection is fertile ground for the resilient. Alex Cromwell never lost his resilience, having moved from England to Africa, and then back to Washington D.C. to finally fulfill his destiny in the pastorate. Racism and sickness were both crises, and could not stop Cromwell from risking his life to be who he always wanted to be. Is it fair to say that his resilience began outside of him, poured into him, and developed through rejection within him? One thing for sure is that his flame could not be smothered, and every crisis fueled his spirit into his destiny.

Shaka Zulu was another resilient Black leader that possessed several qualities that a good leader needs in order to be successful. First and foremost, he led by example. Shaka was a "make it happen" leader, and not a "watch it happening" leader. He personally trained his men for battle. He put them through what he knew would allow them to be the type of soldiers needed for his military. He fought with his army and designed the weaponry the Zulu's needed for battle. It is always easier to persuade men faster with commitment when they can see whom they are following, demonstrating what is being asked of them. Shaka was a unifier. He brought different tribes together and made them all Zulus, expanding the nation from just a little over a thousand to several thousands. He didn't make them feel like foreign Zulus, but a Zulu indeed. As a leader, merging people with differences can be difficult, and the fact he was able to consistently and consecutively be able to do so was outstanding.

They came together and fought as one. Shaka and his Zulus epitomized what William Valmyr meant when he stated, “Leadership matters at every level, at any moment, and in every sphere of influence.” Shaka kept people together, and getting them to care about the same things was challenging. He was able to keep the big picture out in front enough that fighting together was everything for them. He had to confront a major crisis in his time. He fought off the colonizers, and his leadership is recognized today for his resilient efforts towards that endeavor. Shaka confronted another major crisis during his reign. He revolutionized the woman’s place and how she would be viewed progressing forward. All women were expected to stay home, but Shaka created a female division for his military. He gave them responsibility outside of the norm, and they responded. To institute change in a taboo area takes nerve, patience, and faith. Shaka showed society how to birth ideas from your strength, and not allow what others may call a limitation to taint your vision.

Finally, Shaka made disciples. He was a disciplinarian. He understood that instilling pride would take time and tension. His hand was on his military daily. He was an example of the old saying: “inspect what you expect.” Shaka had several great characteristics of a great resilient leader; his tactics were so good that his military continued to use them after his death while fighting off the colonizers. Shaka was violent, but he was not voiceless. He was a fearless protector of heritage and identity. The resilient will always be considered disruptors, especially when they are disrupting the plans of the oppressor that “pens” the narrative.

Jomo Kenyatta, another resilient Black leader, was the president of Kenya, and he navigated his people through tumultuous times. He was a strong leader known for his gift

of gab. He could command a crowd, and he stood up for his people, demanding change. His crisis was threefold. He was Black, fighting colonialism, and wrongfully incarcerated for seven years. Jomo Kenyatta returned to his people and ran for office because of the need for change. Kenyatta was a strong, ethical leader. He demonstrated a different approach with the White colonizers by informing them that he was going to forgive the past and move forward. He believed that a unified Kenya was the best Kenya.

He constantly repeated that Black, Brown, and White people could get along. The Kenyan people didn't expect Kenyatta to want peace and unity with the colonizers, but that was what he believed was necessary for the progression of Kenya. Kenyatta's Black brothers thought he would accept their advice to push the colonizers out, but Kenyatta listened, chose not to follow their advice, and stuck to his own plan. There are times when leaders will have to make decisions that their constituents might not agree with, and do what it takes for the advancement of a people group or a nation. It takes a strong leader to go against his kind, especially when his kind is the victim in reality. This is a strong depiction of resiliency.

Kenyatta confronted crises with strategy, helping the ousted through programs backed by the British, and he was able to purchase 2,750 estates from the Europeans. Twenty-Seven million acres of land were given to Africans around 1973. The economy blossomed under his leadership, as well as the importance placed on education. He was known as one who could play both sides in the political world without losing his African focus. He was a Black leader whose flame could not be smothered by prison, racism, or intra-Black pressure. He did not allow any of the crises of his time to be an excuse for

caring about his people. It would be fair to say that his fuel was the crisis, and he used it to change Kenya for the better.

Black Leadership in Crisis

Strong leadership is undoubtedly one of the greatest assets to any corporation, but to have a strong Black leader is more than just another occupied position. There is no intention in this study to limit strong leadership to the black race but rather cast a light on black leaders as valuable assets and targets that Black youth can aim themselves towards. Black leaders are strong options and not just applicants for affirmative action. Strong Black leaders are hope, examples, and blueprints of what Black children can become. For a Black child to be able to say, “I want to be like him, or like her when I grow up,” instantly sets a standard or a track for a young future leader. Black American youth have been given limited views of leadership to look up to such as sports figures, entertainers, and to what White historians allow to be told in the classroom. While Blacks are grateful for the sports figures and entertainers in their ethnic group, that life is only realistically available to an extremely low two percent of any people group. As Black people journey through life with visible leaders in the areas of influence that run the world, Black power will not just be a saying for the race, but a lived-out reality. It can be said that I can be the next President Barack Obama, Stephen Bantu Biko, Jomo Kenyatta, or King Mansa Musa. Those statements will no longer be monumental but expected, achievable, and normal.

It will set a different drive and expectation in the mind of the young Black pursuer. Future leaders can grow knowing life like this is standard and legacy for the Black future; to be less would be dropping the mic. Black leaders, at times, are not

afforded the same opportunities to make an impact on a global scale and to influence younger generations about future possibilities. The New York Times published an article entitled, “Faces of Power,” which revealed that of the 922 most powerful people in America, only 180 of them are Asian, Hispanic, Native American, or Black. Their findings concluded that 80% of the faces of power were White even though the U.S. has become more diverse than ever in history (See Appendix C). This is a crisis.

It stands to note that there are some positions of power that have no Black representation at all, but through the general lens of minorities, that revelation is politely overshadowed. There is a strong need for Black leaders in high-profile positions to create a sense of it being normal. There is also a need to normalize mainstream access to information about Black leaders throughout history, beyond the American Civil Rights Movement. Change is necessary where power resides, or this crisis will create policies that institutionalize conflict as policy. For hundreds of years, Blacks have endured uncertainty, being unwelcomed, and undervalued, but it has not smothered the flame. The fire is yet burning within the spirit of the Black race. With all the resilience and excellence within the Black culture, the Black man is constantly searching for opportunities to be heard, and be normal in America, and also in certain parts of Africa. This is a crisis. “The Black man contends to be the very opposite of an interlocutor; he remains a topic, a voiceless face under private investigation, an object to be defined and not the subject of a possible discourse.” Let us examine this phraseology.

Voiceless Black Leadership

To be voiceless doesn’t mean to be quiet. While seemingly both have to do with sound, they differ in specifics. To be voiceless is to be speechless, and to be quiet means to make

little or no noise. It is possible to be present with no voice at all, because of a myriad of reasons stemming from validity. To be quiet can be present and silent. It could be by choice or by force, however, being present is the feature that will formulate this focus. In the book, *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa*, the author says, “The Black man contends to be the very opposite of an interlocutor; he remains a topic, a voiceless face under private investigation, an object to be defined and not the subject of a possible discourse.”²⁶ Voiceless and investigated are the product of being the underbelly of supremacy. Many leaders, in particular pastors, go voiceless in global crises, because they believe their voice is only for spiritual purposes only. Often this lesser quoted judgment begins in the house of the Lord. Finally, there are also many leaders that believe their voice is not strong enough to make any sort of significant impact in the bigger picture, so they choose to remain voiceless in this regard.

Exclusion

The term exclusion is defined as the process or the state of excluding or being excluded.²⁷ According to the prescribed writing, the Europeans created philosophy regarding the African people, without the African man. To construct a systematic philosophy about a people group, one would think the presence and participation of that group would be necessary for legitimacy. The Black man will always remain a topic for discussion when his presence is excluded from the table where real discussions are held.

²⁶ Afolayan, Adeshina, Falola, Toyin and Yacob-Haliso, Olajumoke, ed. *Pentecostalism and Politics in Africa* (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 39-40.

²⁷ New Oxford Dictionary of English, s. v. “exclusion,” accessed September 3rd, 2021 www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/english/exclusion.

Father Placid Temples published a written work on Bantu Philosophy regarding African people. After looking deeper into his work, it was discovered that it was not written to the Africans, but to the European colonists and missionaries.

Private Investigation

The term private investigation describes the action of detective work. While an investigation isn't an uncommon performance, it is suspicious when there is no justifiable cause for it. Creating a philosophy around an investigation that the investigated have no personal investment in, is unintelligent. The mere absence of the Black man suspends his input, making him the opposite of a contributor to the conversation. Conversations at the table dismantle theories and myths that have replaced the true essence of the Blackman and his significance. The findings from investigations become his representation. He ultimately becomes what he is called, because those who labeled him have the seats at the table to both define and distinguish. Temples' Bantu philosophy was later "described as mere pretext for learned disquisitions among Europeans."²⁸

Voiceless Faces

Being voiceless isn't uncommon when it comes to representation, but to tie the word to a face is a strange arrangement of words. It is this arrangement that has created the very vacancy that exists. To be defined only, and to never be discussed with, is hypocritical of the labeler, especially if it is supposedly done on purpose. Mudimbe's perspective could cause a person to believe that the voiceless faces of a race came from

²⁸ Afolayan, *Pentecostalism*, 39.

the blindness of another. One of the greatest ways to build leaders is by starting in the family. Black families have been separated since the days of slave ships, entering Africa to seize Blacks as their property. This was all done on purpose, and yet the flame has not been smothered by the crisis that was created intentionally. The more that Black families fight these systemic challenges with intentional excellence for their family context, the more consistency will decrease the gap that exists between the privileged and the Black race. The family dynamic is the breeding ground for birthing the building blocks needed for future Black leaders.

Black Family Leadership

This question was posed: in what way does Muteho Kasongo suggest that family leadership could influence civic leadership? Kasongo does a phenomenal job discussing the impact of the family in Africa. He says, “Since all members of society come from families, this implies that the leaders of societies are formed – at least partly and among other influences – in and by families. Given this, the family has a strong influence on society in various ways. Its power is the power of the whole society. Its weakness impacts on the whole society as well.”²⁹ Families are previews in their sub-cultured state of what the society at large is and will be. Their strengths and weaknesses will be on display in the seats of power of the future. He goes on further to say that children tend to act like the leaders they watched in their home growing up. The participatory family leadership model is a model that civic leadership can definitely benefit from.

²⁹ Stückerleberger and Mugambi, *Responsible Leadership*, 74.

The description of shared responsibility on both sides of the family sets a clear example of the power of participation beyond the nuclear family. This model encompasses nieces, nephews, uncles, and aunts, so it extends beyond son, and daughter, and into clans. It demonstrates leadership, and the extension of values, into multiple generations and different areas. “Daniel Arap Moi defined leadership as ‘the dynamic and catalytic ability of an individual or a group to liberate, engage and direct the constructive endeavors of a people the for betterment of individual and/or whole communities, for their material prosperity and for their social-cultural uplift, spiritual peace, and mental productivity.’”³⁰ Self-respect is a major factor in this model, and leadership will not be effective if respect is mirrored in the family. Real respect is an attribute that every true leader has the responsibility of executing. In the model, discrimination is dismantled, so it sets the standard for all genders, ages, and races to have an equal playing field in society. Education, politics, economic empowerment, housing, and food supply are not limited to just the male population. Everyone has a responsibility to participate, and it is without favoritism. This model is a great prescription for civic influence.

The family construct is the first visible organized structure that a child comes into contact with. Regardless of the marital status of parental management, a model is exemplified to them, and affects them positively or negatively. Leader patterns by parents or guardians are immediately experienced by the children. How to handle confrontation, hard subject matter, teamwork, and deadlines are all leadership skills that are illustrated within any family framework. Black families do indeed have to deal with racial issues,

³⁰ Ibid., 75.

discrimination, and police profiling from day one. If the family dynamic actually teaches its children how to lead, and not just go through the uncertainty they face regularly, a Black child would actually be confidently prepared to lead while going through a crisis.

Chapter Summary

A leader's role in a crisis is to bring clarity to his or her organization and remain responsible. In a crisis, serious leaders are motivated to pull their people and or organization through. This chapter elaborated on credible leaders, and how their voice matters in uncertainty. During a crisis, a leader's voice and presence are necessary for the sanity of those operating within the vision of the leader. People are not looking for a leader to be perfect in navigating through critical times, but rather for him or her to provide some type of hope and direction verbally. A leader's verbal response serves as their presence in a crisis. It allows the follower to continue to trust their own faith as well as the leader's faith in the vision despite the challenges of the time.

Crisis forces ministry leaders to operate in three planes: being situationally aware, biblically faithful, and culturally astute. Leadership agility requires pivoting from normal procedures and methods, leveraging limited resources (money, time, and people), overcoming obstacles, and flexing with new information. Agility begins with the ability to recognize what is essential and what is extra. It requires leaders to have a learning posture — learning from God, each other, and the experts who are elsewhere in the world. In a season where the rules of relational engagement change by the hour, agility wins the day.³¹

Pivoting is the action or method of definitively and deliberately changing a thought, process, action, or course of action. When a crisis interrupts the normal patterns of everyday life, a leader sometimes pivots to keep things afloat. The experience of the unknown can foster resilience in a leader, resourcefulness, and a readiness to turn from

³¹ Ridout, "3 Observations."

comfort into the unknown. It takes courage to lead, especially during the lifetime and eras of some of the leaders that were highlighted in this chapter. Jomo Kenyatta, Shaka Zulu and, most recently Bishop Desmond Tutu, faced harsh times that required a lifetime commitment to their call. In the face of crises, neither man's flame was smothered by fear or foe, but instead, their fire burned the more to see change take place. Each leader discussed had similar characteristics as it pertains to leadership.

Their responses to the crisis of their time are one of the reasons they were known and are now remembered. Leadership is not easy and it takes time, but when there are no examples it is even harder. The influence of the family factor influences leadership from the start. One of the most essential qualities found in a leader is influence. Families are the first influencer a child encounters in life. It is fair to say that a child learns first by experiencing what leadership appears to be in their home. The leadership prowess in early childhood could possibly start the trajectory of black future leaders. Future leaders are better leaders when they are fostered in environments that display a healthy family dynamic. Healthy is not determined by both parents being home, but more so by healthy parenting, which involves temperament, timeliness, and togetherness. All three traits and even more are highly recommended to be a good leader, and they are discoverable to children that are examples in front of them.

Chapter Five

Effective Crisis Response Plans/ Skills and Resiliency

Overview

Upon further assessment of how leaders respond to crises, it is noticeable that churches thrive from the resilience of their leaders and leadership teams. Their love for the people seems to be demonstrated in the creative implementation of policies and procedures for crisis management. Effective response planning to crises is necessary for organizational sustainability. An informed leader with skills, insight, and resilience has a grasp on how and what is affecting the world. Informed churches are reflections of their leadership. Their collective knowledge of world crises can contribute to strategizing the church while facing uncertainty. Society has endured many crises as well as those that have crossed the threshold of the church. The church is a part of society and both experienced the world-wide crisis called Covid-19.

The impact of Covid-19 was severe. It affected the world in a way that would change how humanity experienced life. That change would include the church, and how Sunday morning services would no longer be the same. Covid-19 was the single most significant crisis that created a complete shutdown of gatherings around the world. Church changed, school changed, and every nonprofit and for-profit organization had to advance themselves digitally immediately. The world and the church were both shut down. “The sudden shutdown took a drastic toll on the U.S., as businesses shed millions

of jobs in an attempt to stay afloat and two presidential administrations had to use executive orders and pass massive spending bills to try to stave off economic collapse.”¹

The church was indirectly affected because its parishioners were losing capital, and some were losing their jobs. Job cuts were taking place in different parts of the country. People needed help, and there was a considerable amount of uncertainty all over the country.

The unemployment rate spiked as millions were out of work. Initial unemployment claims surged from 281,000 early in the month to 3.3 million by March 26. Overall, the economy shed more than 850,000 jobs in March 2020 before a whopping 20.5 million were lost in April, leading to the unemployment rate climbing all the way to 14.7 percent. On March 27, Trump signed a \$2 trillion COVID-19 relief bill, the CARES Act, which gave each adult in the U.S. a one-time payment of \$1,200 and added another \$500 for every child. Money was also provided to different business sectors, and small businesses were granted billions of dollars in loans and grants to counter the blow of the pandemic.²

Crisis after crisis continuously evolved from the Covid-19 virus. The interesting truth about America was that it would not stop fighting, and the church's fire would not stop burning. Times were uncharted but faced resilience.

Social Crisis, Social Distance

In January 2020, no one knew that the church norm would soon be shattered. In March 2020, churches around the world started to close in rapid succession due to the havoc of Covid-19. Church, as was known before then, consisted of parking lot greeters with signs and amazement upon entering the sacred parking spaces. The exiting of the vehicle and the entering of the lobby was an experience of its own, from the door greeter

¹ Lexi Lonas, “The Covid-19 Shutdown: A Timeline of How the Pandemic Changed the US Economy,” The Hill, Last modified May 5, 2022. <https://thehill.com/policy/finance/3478647-a-timeline-of-the-covid-19-economy/>.

² Lonas, “Covid-19 Shutdown.”

to the host teams, to the ambiance. This description of the church quickly came to a halt as social distancing was put in place by the government, after being recommended by medical professionals. A six-foot distance between individuals became a requirement everywhere, including church. With this requirement, seating in the auditorium became an issue, resulting in a decrease in physical attendance. People were frightened and building capacity was strictly enforced. At this time seating was six feet apart and every other row in the auditoriums.

Children's church, greeting, ushering, worship team placement, and the human touch was no longer a part of the church experience. These changes altogether created a new style of church that lasted for several months. Sanctuaries around the world were vacant. They reminded one of the old western ghost towns. Children's churches no longer existed because of the fear of spreading Covid-19 to children. In an effort to return to in-person services, ministries were providing masks for those attending and others demanded that you bring your own. The congregants that returned to in-person gatherings were those that were ready to move forward in the pandemic. They were willing to wear masks during the worship services. However, the masks do restrict certain worship experiences. The restrictions, coupled with a year of no in-person worship, created an entirely different experience. The church was not the same. With the development of the vaccine, the death rate began to level off and the United States would get closer to immunity. Wearing masks in turn had begun to become optional in certain establishments if one was vaccinated. The vaccine created a stir among many, particularly the Black race. Black people have been test subjects for different medical studies, maladies, and

abuses in and out of American History. The horrific history is what created a negative perspective towards the vaccine, such as the Tuskegee experiment.

For 40 years, African Americans were a part of a Human Experimentation Study in America, where the people were injected with syphilis and then observed without treatment. The sad part about this was that the African Americans who were studied had no idea, and were told they were being treated for a blood condition. As a result, many died, and that experiment haunts African Americans to this day. What a crisis! Many prominent pastors began to use their social media platforms to leverage their influence. They retrieved an answer about the vaccines from medical professionals to inform their congregants about it. Pastors started recording themselves on social platforms taking the vaccine, but not forcing their parishioners to do so. Churches that had more than one hundred employees were forced to enact the law passed by President Biden to take the vaccine, or risk the chance of being terminated. Churches and public health professionals around the world started organizing partnerships to facilitate the vaccination of their members and community.

Social Media

The pandemic created problems for the world and for the church, however, it has also created opportunities for them both. The new norm of how life is to be lived also changed how Sunday morning worship has to be experienced. Online church is nothing new; however, it is not the focal point of a Sunday morning worship service pre-pandemic. Websites, apps, and Facebook Live are already implemented for many churches that are using online services as a supplement or enhancement to the local institution up until this point. Religious institutions were faced with modernizing their

digital capabilities to remain relevant throughout the pandemic. The governmental factions made during the pandemic forced churches to become more innovative in their approach to doing ministry. The traditional Sunday morning, as everyone had previously known, was over. No more cars in the parking lot, no greeters, no security, no ushers, and no social interaction, and the world had changed.

The mega-church model has been prepared because of its TV-ready ability, staffing, and budgeting. The large, medium, and small church models, however, are all on different wavelengths. Their streaming challenges continue to be based on their lack of budgeting, staffing, vision, prowess, and/or equipment. The main conversation has evolved into “where is the church going?” Digital church has presented itself as the answer; however, no one has known if it is the new normal or a quick answer to the worship dilemma. New problems arise, such as streaming providers, viewership, engagement, and giving. One major issue the church has faced is the challenge to offer services for their congregants such as baptisms, christenings, marriage ceremonies, in-person counseling, prison visitations, hospital visitations, and rigorous rules for feeding and clothing the less fortunate. Online church has evolved and many innovative ways to do ministry have emerged. The entire congregation had become e-Members. “Text to Give” became the primary way for collecting financial contributions. Content has become king as Covid continues.

Churches are providing new ways to engage their online viewers by adding different types of content i.e. pre-shows, talk shows, comedy shows, inspirational movies, interviews etc. With all of the new creative ways to do church, Pastors of smaller congregations are having a difficult time retaining viewership/membership. For many

churches, their attendance has decreased and some have closed. This unfortunate event caused many pastors and leadership teams to succumb to the pressure to be seen. Other churches were seeing a major increase in their online attendance and online giving. The online ministry provides the opportunity for an international platform. More eyes are on the computer during Sunday morning worship than ever before. People were not married to their local institution any longer, they now have the opportunity to experience multiple services from different institutions online. The exposure benefited many pastors and churches and simultaneously placed them under a microscope. Pastors began going viral for the opinion of their messaging by the viewer.

You might wonder if social media has been destructive for the contemporary church because of stories you've heard. You may be asking: Isn't social media just full of garbage and the worst parts of our society? The reality is that Christ called us to be salt and light, going into all of the world to meet people where they are and to share the gospel message of Jesus Christ.³

Pastor Mensa Otabil has had an observer named Ken Taylor who, in turn, has taken many of his sermons and articulated them on his own YouTube channel, generating many followers to hear his thoughts on what he perceived the message to be. These types of YouTube shows are emerging stronger during the pandemic, being purely oppositional based. The problem with these YouTube rants is that they generate many viewers/followers. YouTubers like Kevin Taylor often have the inability to discuss biblical truths. How can an opposer accuse someone without proper proof of the misuse of scripture, when they are ignorant of it themselves? There are many bloggers and vloggers that have become famous for taking a moment out of context. Their arrival has

³ Forrester, *Trending Up*.

been the antagonist to the virtual church. With the entire world becoming predominantly virtual, their visibility has increased. The virtual church does have additional pros and cons. Overall, it helped meet the needs of a vacant church at a time when the world needed a positive message. Creating new virtual sustainable models benefits the smaller church, which will also decrease the pressure of trying to compete for their own congregants' views against mega-churches.

Social Church/Relevance

The world had been digitized for some time now. Walmart, CVS, and many other stores have been using computer-generated self-checkouts for several years now. The airports have computer generated convenience stores where you have to scan your credit card before entering and just walk out with your product. Gas stations have been using this technology for years by paying at the pump. Non-person customer service has become the norm in society. Interpersonal skills are no longer necessary for great jobs anymore. If you can code you can earn a great living in this evolving world. Google, Amazon, and Facebook have changed the landscape of doing life. Artificial intelligence is the wave of now. Many leaders are resistant to change and afraid of leading out front when it pertains to the next shift in the culture.

Change can be challenging for some leaders to accept and easier for others. A leader facing a crises ability to adapt can assist leaders with remaining in sync with the trends or times. There are certain leaders that believe culture doesn't shape the faith but vice versus. This is certainly understandable but the people that attend their churches are living in real-time with the culture. There must be a ground that allows a cohesive merge so that culture meets a church that is not prehistoric. Christ came to the world to

understand the current times. His teachings were parables and they were stories that met the time the people were living in and challenged their minds to perceive a time they had not envisioned. His teaching of bringing the kingdom to the earth described this merger spoken of earlier and simultaneously spoke of something else greater coming. A good church with good leaders will always keep its ears in the wind listening to the whispers of what is coming on the horizon. This is accomplished by building great relationships outside of the church.

Dr. Vashti McKenzie was a keynote speaker at Jakes Divinity symposium and she spoke on church relevance. She stated, “The church is challenged by the change that is already here.” For many reasons, the black church is further behind when it comes to technology and creativity. One of the main factors is the Black church does not have the finances to keep up with what is trending. Finances cover the technology, training, updates needed for software, and the salary to pay the staff to operate. Change becomes almost impossible when the budget speaks, without questioning if it is possible. So, what is new is not even an option for many churches. Rather it is what can we do and often that is nothing because it is unaffordable. Trying to keep up with the current pace of change can be intimidating for the average church and fulfilling for others. “The church is caught in the crosswinds of what is no longer and what is on the way.” -Dr. Vashti McKenzie

In Dr. McKenzie’s presentation, she mentioned how rivers constantly change and how they differ from lakes because they are constant. She said that lakes never change because they have no momentum; they are still. The kingdom is more like a river than it is a lake. Rivers have a flow and create energy. The energy is created from the different currents colliding and becoming one river. If local churches could collide like river

currents without the spirit of comparison and competition the energy that could come from it could possibly keep some churches and leaders from plateauing and closing.

Trends and Patterns

A trend denotes a commonality or consistent occurrence in the change or development of something. The example she used in her presentation was when the flip phone became ancient as the world leaned towards smartphones. Smartphones were what the world was changing into. Knowing what is trending is important if you are going to be in any kind of business. As a church, it is the job of its leaders to search and stay on the cutting edge. The simplest way to stay current is really easier than one would imagine. There are fourteen tools at anyone's fingertips (See Appendix D). If you have a computer and Wi-Fi, it is just that easy to search.

Understanding what is next is not just spiritual, it is also the due diligence of responsible leaders to stay in touch with the world they live in and serve.

Social media is the Wild West of communications and marketing. Every day, it seems a new social-media platform, tool, or service pops up and causes us all to go back to the drawing board. In the midst of all of that chaos, a 2013 report by Advertising Age indicated that there were more than 181,000 self-proclaimed social media gurus, masters, mavens, or ninjas. Just think of all of those voices scrambling to make sense of the daily shifts and struggles in the social media landscape!⁴

A Pattern is more than a general direction, it is repeated characteristics that are on display over a period of time. As Dr. Vashti expounded on patterns, she shared that, “there has always been one in motion such as human crises followed up by spiritual responses.” Jim Crow was a human crisis and it was followed up by the civil rights

⁴ Forrester, *Trending Up*, 17.

movement which was a spiritual response. World Wars One and Two, the Great Depression, and American Chattel slavery were all human crises followed by the social gospel, parachurch organization, and Sunday school. The Black church has always had a spiritual response to natural crises and its leaders. The Black church itself was a spiritual response to enslavement and persecution. It takes a creative, resilient, and bold leader to lead a movement as a response well to a crisis that affects the world. The type of leaders who are able to stand in such a way are usually singled out and criticized. “Leaders you criticize today, you will ask them to coach you tomorrow” – Dr. Vashti McKenzie One of the greatest leaders ever to live on earth was Jesus Christ. How he selected and trained his leaders are worth evaluating. He chose them, empowered them, paired them together, and he established a correction culture for them. He walked with them, he walked before them, and then he left them to repeat the process. He taught parables so that his lessons were relevant to his audience. “Jesus invaded the normal to create a new normal” - Dr. Vashti McKenzie. The church has to find a way in its messaging about Christ and his church to remain relevant as times change. Programs and policies are necessary, but “the relevant church should be a place of prophecy and not just a program.”

Dr. McKenzie believes that prophetic patterns are necessary for the church to stay relevant and to have direction when a crisis strikes. The following ideals are suggestive of what Dr. McKenzie believes regarding the prophetic and the relevant church: first, without prophecy, people become demoralized. Second, the church should be going somewhere, on purpose, with a fresh revelation. Third, it (the church) is a church that functions in a “right now word,” and not one that is left over from the other day. And lastly, people of destiny can become demoralized and perish because there is no word.

In conclusion of Dr. McKenzie's presentation, she suggested that for the church not to be relevant is a form of disobedience. "Disobedience leads to disorder and disorder leads to drama; when there is drama in the church God's agenda comes under attack." An attack from disobedience can create an unexpected crisis of its own creating confusion in the ministry experience. "Ministry is the manifestation of what is taught." A relevant church, according to Dr. McKenzie, is more focused on God than it is itself, is the "whatever it takes" church, takes what happens *inside* the church *outside*, speaks the truth in love, and sees beyond its own lifetime.

Media and Messaging

Why social media? We have to first realize the powerful force it has become and then ask; how can the church leverage this power for the gospel? How can we take the most creative and dynamic innovation of the twenty-first century and use this technology to tell the greatest story ever told in fresh new ways?⁵

During Covid, churches begin attempting unique ways to have service. Even though Covid created an uncomfortable moment for the church it also opened the door to the imagination era of the church. If you had the resources this was the time to do anything you could think of to capture views online. Churches were having service on the roof of their edifices, parking lot church, drive by church, complete movie productions, house services, reality TV services, podcast services, zoom audiences set up in the sanctuary on digital screens, and shared online audiences between two churches with two pastors sharing the sermonic moment. Creativity and innovation were at the forefront of progressive ministries seeking to stay relevant to their parishioners. Pastors that other

⁵ Forrester, *Trending Up*.

leaders looked to went even further. Bishop TD Jakes remained the figurehead through the pandemic on how to navigate through the crisis. He leveraged his leadership prowess with social media and traditional media during the crises to give the world hope, but it also placed a bullseye on the Potter's House of Dallas. His viewership increased from 25,000 – over 70,000 live viewers for a Sunday morning worship experience.

Making himself available to the news to offer comfort immediately increased his validity in the world's eye as a trusted messenger for even the unchurched and non-Christian to listen to. Bishop Jakes videoed himself receiving the vaccine. This act alone moved many African Americans to trust health officials and take the vaccine. He held online conversations with the creator of the vaccine as well as Dr. Fauci, the director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) and the Chief Medical Advisor to the President. Bishop TD Jakes and his leadership team formulated ways to check on its several thousand-member congregations through associate pastor-led zoom calls, tree calls, pop-up social media check-ins, and a plethora of online services made available 24 hours. He wrote a book entitled “Don’t Drop the Mic,” which came out in the heat of the pandemic that equips leaders to avoid silence in the crisis. Media and messaging were the bread and butter of the community during the pandemic.

The camera shots and the length of service were all taken into consideration for an online experience because the entire church was at home. One-click on the computer welcomed people in or exited them.

A recent survey shows that two-thirds of American adults now use social media (up from just 7 percent a decade ago), and nine out of ten young adults ages eighteen to twenty-nine are using social media. Even latecomers to the social media party (those sixty-five and older) have still tripled over the last five years.

Your people are already on social media, and if you are not, your absence has been noted.⁶

Messaging was directed to a church body that was no longer in the room. Social Media provided an equal playing field for ministries because the average member was at home surfing the internet and glancing at other churches. Before the pandemic one had to drive to another church and choose to miss their own. In light of covid-19, the virtual church allowed an individual to visit any church anywhere in the world at any time.

Field Research

For the Field Research, one week (April 18th – 24th) was spent interviewing senior pastors of churches of various sizes. The research material peaked into the advancement of digital media in ministry. Understanding the framework of the local church this particular investigation was intriguing to pursue what methods churches employed digitally to stay afloat during the pandemic. The future of the church rested in the hand of the leader that is strong enough to share power in a space that is uncommon to many. This space is called cyberspace. The economy is driven by it, and the church at large is behind the speed of time as it pertains to the benefits it brings. The name of the religious institutions are as follows: The Milestone Church pastored by Bishop Larry Jackson, Bethel Christ Church pastored by Randy Johnson, Power Church pastored by Bishop Cain Williams, and The Cathedral pastored by Len Young.

The conversations with all the pastors started with holy greetings and small talk. All senior pastors invited their administrative assistants to help recall as much pertinent

⁶ Forrester, *Trending Up*, 28.

information as possible to bring clarity to their responses. The pandemic affected each institution differently and each pastor similarly. The goal of the pastors was yet the same to keep their people protected from the virus but through different methods. These conversations were held using FaceTime and zoom technology in the evening after the pastors and leaders finished their day.

Written Methodology

This research methodology included interviews with African American pastors. Most of them did not have the financial ability to purchase high-quality equipment to produce the level of production that was competitive with the mega-churches. Covid-19 forced all churches to upgrade how they did church without any warning or opportunity to warm up to television expectations. The research focused on examining stressors pastors and or leaders experienced during crises. In addition, it was also the plan to provide information that can provide a road map for future crisis situations and a guide on how to do church. The church has been on Sundays and Wednesdays since the beginning of time. The pandemic created an opportunity to have church any day. It opened the realm of possibilities by creating whatever for whoever. Different types of religious services began to be the appetite of many that were tired of the norm. This sudden change created a sudden hunger that only creativity and innovation could feed. “Planning requires creativity and a regimented practice”⁷ The pastors who were not staffed and trained for digital media suffered and pressures increased because of the blindness of shepherding. It was not that the pastor lost his or her physical sight but they

⁷ R. A. Vernon, *HELP! My Pastor Is Under Pressure: How Leaders Can Help Their Pastor Succeed* (Shaker Heights, OH: Victory Media & Publishing Co., LLC, 2017) 22.

were unable to place their eyes on their parishioners due to government shutdowns and shelter and place. The detachment of the pastor and parishioner created a crisis internally for the pastors.

Critical Analysis

The church today has changed. Prior to the pandemic live streaming services did not get the same appreciation as in-person worship did. Streaming in for service was often viewed as being lazy, inactive, antisocial, and making church a low priority. Covid-19 altered this perception altogether. Not only were you kept out of the physical church, but you also were kept from the people in the church changing the way you Established and built community. The small church that was not digitally savvy seemed to have been victimized by the pandemic. The conversations held with the pastors revealed different levels of readiness. Readiness is defined as “the quality or state of being ready; a state of preparation.”⁸ While no one was ready for Covid, many churches were ready for digital ministry. The church that mainly believed digital ministry had no place or that it was simply unnecessary suffered greatly. Bethel Christ Church did not have a digital outlet. This church had no text to give, no Facebook, no website, no app, and no Twitter. The church before Covid was always full to capacity, but during Covid had no way of communicating with its parishioners outside of the pew. To solve this issue one of the members of the church utilized their cell phone and logged into their personal Facebook account to stream their church services. Who is this person and how do we find them to enjoy the worship encounter was the thought of the parishioners who attended the

⁸ Merriam-Webster, s. v. “Readiness,” Accessed December 20, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/readiness>.

church? There were many issues with this solution starting with the quality of sound, sight, and production outright.

The Milestone Church was a full-capacity church prior to COVID. Not being able to congregate weekly created an inability to worship and build community. The difference between Milestone Church and Bethel Christ Church was the philosophy of digital ministry. The Bethel Christ Church never saw digital ministry as an asset at all while the Milestone Church took advantage of the crisis and fully engaged in the possibility of digital expansion. Lyn Wilson and Jason Moore define “media as the plural form of the word medium, which is an agent for transmitting messages between senders and receivers.”⁹ The Milestone Church was willing to do whatever it took to get the word out. Bethel Christ Church remained with the old model and is still suffering the outcome of being disinterested in digital media. The senior pastor of Milestone Church experienced stress in a different way than the pastor of Bethel Christ Church. While both had very real concerns about the health of their parishioners, only one was concerned enough to innovate their philosophy for sustainability. The Milestone Church immediately raised money and purchased equipment for the time and time to come. They created new staff positions and changed some financial significance within the staff. What was important in the previous season became insignificant in the season they were in. The stress the senior pastor began to experience derived from training the untrained and finding time to train himself to be a sufficient trainer to others. Where the Milestone Church upgraded and prepared for change, Bethel Christ Church remained unchanged;

⁹ Len Wilson and Jason Moore, *The Wired Church 2.0* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008) 15.

bothered by the changes in the world. Both pastors experienced pandemic pressures however only one faced the challenge with creativity and innovation.

Power Church was the third church and it was prepared digitally for the ramifications of Covid. They had a digital presence with a digital team, however the pandemic created pressure that the digital team collapsed. The stress on the senior pastor grew because of the expectation that was not taken seriously or innovatively. The expectation of the Power Church leadership was to be an option in the home of all its parishioners; this pressure was to compete with the quality of other ministries with the same quality. The church's digital team was all volunteer based which seemed to have been the root problem of the inability to perform at a superior level. Prior to the pandemic this church was to capacity and had a strong viewership digitally. The lack of highly trained digital staff created a staleness in production causing the ministry to no longer be a trusted option for viewers because of an unprofessional and undependable work ethic.

The fourth church, Cathedral Church, went virtual and is no longer having in-person services. The church decided to remain an online institution. The Senior Pastor accepted the new norm which allowed him to live what he called a regular life. He and his family also joined another ministry where he explores his other gifts. However, their virtual campus allowed him to open his personal calendar to preach around the region without having to return to speak at his own location. The finances increased, overhead decreased and the pre-recordings were done anywhere at any time at his leisure. His stress ceased and he dispersed his congregation to go where they pleased. He described Covid as a blessing to their ministry.

In summary, digital ministry/ social media is here to stay, however, its importance of it will vary depending on the philosophy of the senior pastor and the leadership team. Surprisingly, Bethel Christ Church advanced minutely in providing its parishioners the opportunity to evolve during the pandemic. The church actually remained antiquated and yet searching for answers to problems that have already been answered. The Milestone Church increased its viewership and membership during the pandemic. However, it did suffer financially as well as the Bethel Christ Church. Power Church did not grow numerically but did not suffer financially. The stressors from all the ministries were different and each leader experienced the pandemic in a different way. The online ministry has changed the way church is done and the expectation. “Only the innovative will survive the trend.”¹⁰ Included in this study is a one-sheet example of how to do church which includes management and sanctuary expression. (See Appendix G).

¹⁰ *[The names of the churches and pastors have been changed to protect the privacy of their institutions.]*

Chapter Six

Recommendations for Further Study

Overview

The world shut down. The shutdown is a full stop; it means, “The cessation or suspension of an operation or activity.”¹ Was the world malfunctioning? Did the world need maintenance? There was no cure for what the world was going through, and there was no previous strategy to pull from. The world as it was formerly known was no more. It was shut down, similar to being on house arrest, and a new normal was forced to be acclimated to. Home life, church life, and social life became limited and digitized. Instacart became the choice for grocery shopping. Amazon amplified as online shopping became the prescribed and preferred way of life. Life was simply different. “Among the ways the pandemic affected social lives: The majority of all U.S. adults (57%) and practicing Christians (62%) shared they had altered, skipped or canceled major events and milestones they were looking forward to as a result of the pandemic.”²

¹ Merriam-Webster, s. v. “Shutdown,” accessed December 23, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/shutdown>.

² Barna, “A Year Out: How Covid-19 has Impacted Practicing Christians,” last modified March 18, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/a-year-out/>.

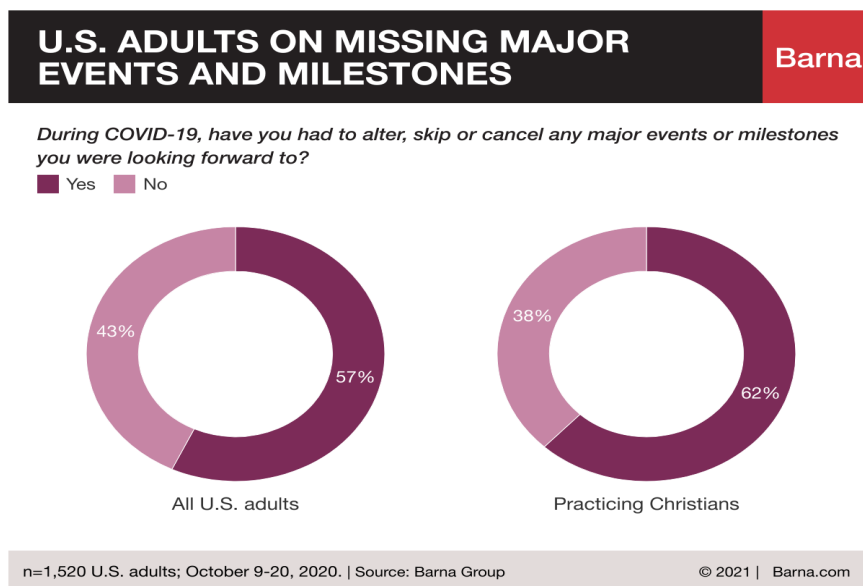


Figure 2. Chart on missing milestone due to the pandemic.

Society was missing gatherings, so there was an upsurge of creative online experiences. Celebrities started going live on their social media pages, and having online conversations with each other. Famous DJs started online parties. Artists started battling each other with Versus competitions. The best of the best was in competition with each other, and they gathered several thousands of online viewers in attendance. All of this creativity stemmed from not being able to gather. People also started to miss each other more and more. There were parties that young adults started having to quench the thirst of wanting to get out of the house. As a result, there would be a rise in Covid cases because of their non-compliance. There were two different responses from the church world. Many predominantly White churches never stopped physically going to church. Most predominantly Black churches were experiencing a completely different response, however. Many Whites saw not going to church as the government trying to control them. Blacks were dying from Covid-19, and for many congregants across the country, the fear of death had a strong grip on their desire to return to church physically.

The different responses placed a tremendous amount of pressure on leaders. The pressure was disruptive for many pastors, bishops, and clergy.

We're trying to figure it out, but there's no blueprint for this ... It's almost as if all of us now are kind of required to be church planters, to think outside the box, to imagine what it looks like. And for those of us who grew up in the church and have this image of what ministry looks like, to pull yourself apart from that image ... We're unlearning ministry and starting from scratch.³

When one considers the amount of pressure that the leadership of churches endure during crises, it brings an understanding of the shutdown rate that exists within them. Besides the normal everyday criticism churches receive for being what they are, their critics often forget that the church is also going through the same crises.

The church has to think fast in a crisis and win its followers with its strategic planning while enduring the effects of a crisis individually and institutionally. Churches and their leaders are pockets of hope all around their cities. Where do *they* go for help, resources, and/or support in the same crisis that they're serving others in? Whom do *they* turn to? Who does the pastor turn to for personal help after helping so many others? "Keep the fire burning," is more than a phrase that is passed around from person to person. It is as real as the fire. Fires do not remain burning on their own. Something has to be added to keep it blazing, whether it is wood, lighter fluid, or stoking it to move things around. Fires eventually burn out. Knowing this, it is imperative that the church keep its fire burning with other ways beyond a crisis. It needs the urgency that crises

³ Erin F. Johnston, David E. Eagle, Jennifer Headley, and Anna Holleman, "Pastoral Ministry in Unsettled Times: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of Clergy during the Covid-19 Pandemic," National Library of Medicine, August 6, 2021. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8344328/>.

bring without the crisis itself. This chapter seeks to provide recommendations for leaders and their church organizations before crisis strikes.

In the book, *The American Church in Crisis*, the author expresses what he believes the church needs in leadership to have a serious future in the post-pandemic world (See Appendix E). The list is 10 declarations of changes for the success of the American Church.

Online Church Freedom

Innovative leadership will be critical for the post-pandemic church. It will take more than regular on-stage preaching to hold an online audience. People online want to feel connected, and a part of the church as well. The days of just watching a service are over. The camera angles have changed, polished commercials are no longer necessary, and the online viewers want an inside raw look at what things are like. E-church or the “online” church will need its reigns loosened if the church is to remain an option in the digital space. The church is not just competing against other ministries, but anything that can cause the viewer to click a button; view something else that might not even be faith-based. It is a fight for focus. Senior pastors will have to let go of some control if they want to see their online services expand beyond in-house attendance.

So, let’s embrace digital, but let’s not capitulate to digital. Seems like a contradiction, right? Except it’s not; it is a tension that will save us from the dangers of both extremes. If we resist digital, we will continue to lose our two youngest generations (and the next generation of church leadership). If we capitulate, we will give into consumer-driven, preference-based Christianity and lose our effectiveness. But if we first map out our biblical convictions and clearly define the biblical community, and then innovate radically with digital tools to support that, we will get the benefits of both.⁴

⁴ Barna, “Excerpt: Better Questions & Disciples for Digital Church Innovation,” Last modified February 2nd, 2022, <https://www.barna.com/research/excerpt-disciplined-digital/>.

In the book, *Trending Up*, the author shares how social media will be critical to the expression of the church's mission digitally. Social media is a digital space for churches to not only share moments of the sermon but stories that make the mission statements come alive. It's important going forward that if the church is to remain relevant it cannot compete against itself:

To do that, your social media strategy should fit into everything your church communicates, which means it must fit into a bigger story. So where does this bigger story exist? Thankfully, it might be closer than you think. The best way to bring social media into a bigger story is to use it to help tell the three bigger stories already happening around you: your church's bigger story, your community's bigger story, and God's bigger story. Identifying each one is the first step in understanding how social media can complement—and not compete with—everything you do.⁵

Not only does your church's story matter, your community's story matters. Churches have to connect the stories together, build partnership with those who spearhead them, and release the story online. Digital collaboration has already become a trend for increased visibility online. Online interaction will be a necessity, as apps have improved even more. The connection between the viewer and the vision must become the priority for the viewer, and not the secondary. As time continues in this post-covid era, churches cannot fall into the trap of digital ministry being secondary. By giving the online church its freedom, the right questions will continue to be asked like they were in the thick of Covid. These questions opened the window of creativity and obliterated the lid. The same hunger for innovation has to remain in the church if it is to remain relevant as time continues to turn. The digital world is the new mission field, and it is going to

⁵ Forrester, *Trending Up*, 51.

require vision to minister to that world differently than the traditional normal approach that is no longer in demand. “The post-quarantine church is more likely to grasp the perspectives of these innovative churches. During the quarantine, they not only discovered ways to continue their existing ministries, but they also began to see new fields and new opportunities.”⁶

In the book, *the Post Quarantine Church*, the author communicates effectively about three different attendees in the digital world that the online church will have to consider:

The first group represents a digital-only presence, which could include people who are physically unable to attend in-person gatherings. The second group are digitally transitioning people. They are still mostly connected to the church digitally. They rarely, if ever, attend an in-person gathering. But there are indications they are somewhat open to connecting in person. The third group are the dual citizens. They are connected to your congregation both digitally and in person. This distinction is important to remember. It’s pretty rare anymore to find someone who has no digital connections, even if they strongly prefer in-person gatherings⁷

The future church will require a digital focus not because of the church alone, but because the world is already there, and trying to go where it has never been before. If the church does not loosen its reins online it will be prehistoric in a present world that has no appetite for the meal the church is serving.

Group Therapy for Pastors and Leaders

⁶ Thom S. Rainer, *the Post-Quarantine Church: Six Urgent Challenges and Opportunities That Will Determine the Future of Your Congregation*, (Carol Stream: Tyndale House Publishers, 2020), 26.

⁷ Ibid., 29.

Pastors have a strong demand on their lives from a myriad of spaces. Family, church, friends, extra careers, personal branding, organizational branding, people's opinions, and their own personal endeavors. With all the pressure that comes with being human, and as a human who is also a Christian leader, they hardly have anywhere they can go without being judged or ridiculed for areas that they need help in. They have to be very selective in choosing who will help them as anyone else should be. Ramon Presson of Lifeway Research wrote an article entitled, "8 Reasons Pastors Resist Going to Counseling." The reasons he listed are as follows: they are uncomfortable with the role reversal, they're supposed to be the experts, they're concerned about confidentiality, they distrust psychology, they over-spiritualize mental health, they cannot identify the right counselor, they have limited accessibility to a trained listener, and they have limited budgets.⁸

The list is intriguing, and only partially true. Pastors have to be careful about whom they share with. Confidentiality is very important, and these selections are no different for the regular human being. No one wants to share personal information with anyone that is not safe to share. Being uncomfortable with role reversal is too far from the truth. Pastors do not think they are experts in fields that they know they are not. To say a pastor does not trust psychology is farfetched. Today, the church is much more informed about mental health *and* mental illness. Identifying the right counselor is a task for the average person and not just a pastor. Finding trained listeners and a counselor within the budget is also possible. The aforementioned are all reasons that anyone could

⁸ Ramon Presson, "8 Reasons Pastors Resist Going to Counseling," Lifeway Research, Last modified September 9, 2020, <https://research.lifeway.com/2020/09/09/8-reasons-pastors-resist-going-to-counseling/>.

use for not going to a counselor. The author's list is not well thought out for today's pastor, however, what stood out in his article was:

The pastoral storms of feeling overwhelmed and defeated were raging long before COVID-19 hit us and changed everything suddenly and dramatically. Pastors are concerned about their anxious flocks—the health scares, job insecurity, and financial instability among their congregations. At the same time, pastors are scrambling to figure out how to deliver sermons, continue ministries, create a sense of community, and mitigate financial shortfalls. Those sudden and drastic pivots, the feelings of loss, and the feeling of helplessness to stop the losses can combine to drain the morale of a pastor and staff. And if you consider our politically divisive and socially volatile landscape, I can't think of a period during my lifetime when it's been more difficult to be a Christian leader—particularly a pastor—than right now.⁹

For the longevity of the creative leader, there has to be more significance placed on the mental health of the senior leader and the staff that tirelessly make the ministry run. While therapy is not outlawed, there is not much mental concern for leadership until it is almost too late. Most churches are under 100 members and the pastors were a variety of hates. A study in 2021 by Faith life reported the information below:

Approximately 35% of pastors reported feeling burned out, with 40% of pastors aged 25 to 40 saying they agree or strongly agree to feeling constantly burned out. This is nearly double the rate at which pastors aged 60-plus reported feeling burned out (21%). While most pastors (55%) are fulfilled by the responsibility of giving spiritual and emotional support to their flock, many survey respondents noted how pastoral care is a mix of highs and lows, with 45% finding it draining.¹⁰

The highs and lows of leading are more difficult to manage for some pastors than it is for others. Unmet expectations and unresolved issues, whether personal or institutional, add weight to their overall survival. Many pastors have committed suicide,

⁹ Presson, "8 Reasons."

¹⁰ Rush to Press, "Faithlife conducts survey on Mental Health of Pastors," Last modified July 15, 2021, <https://rushtopress.org/9111-2/>.

vacated the pulpit, and were significantly under-compensated, so for there not to be a more emphasis on the leadership's mental health is a lack of care by the ministry he or she serves (See Appendix F). This study recommends further study, emphasizing leadership being required to attend a form of group therapy on an ongoing basis. This requirement would keep the leaders mentally healthy as he or she leads through crises regularly.

By requiring pastors and leaders to attend therapy on a regular basis, it is an educated guess that it would reduce the chance of moral failures, and suicide attempts, and allow the pastor an opportunity to deal with his or her emotions. The healthier the leader, the healthier the church. When pastors do not have an outlet, they are a crisis to themselves, their families, and the church they lead. To keep the fire fueled in the post-Covid church, its pastor will need to be therapeutically fostered as they lead the flock they are assigned to. A crisis adds new weight to the call for leadership. If another crisis like Covid comes again, the leaders need to be cognitively prepared to handle the unknown.

When asked directly about their initial experiences, pastors described this period as marked by questions, meetings, and discussions—with pastoral teams, lay leaders, and denominational leaders—about how best to move forward. Pastors felt their lives became busier in this early period, not necessarily because there was more to do, but because their established routines were profoundly disrupted and they had to create and implement new forms of practice.¹¹

Crisis Playbook for Churches

¹¹ Erin F. Johnston, David E. Eagle, Jennifer Headley, and Anna Holleman, "Pastoral Ministry in Unsettled Times: A Qualitative Study of the Experiences of Clergy during the Covid-19 Pandemic," National Library of Medicine, August 6, 2021. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC8344328/>.

There are many conferences around the world that pastors have annually to prepare many other pastors and leaders around the world on how to lead successfully. Bishop IV Hilliard, Bishop TD Jakes, Pastor Ed Young, and Pastor RA Vernon all have conferences that empower pastors and leaders how to lead their churches on the level they are serving on. All of these men are superior leaders; the world and the church look to them for answers in times of chaos. You can witness seeing either of these men in front of thousands of people and are often interviewed by the media. As much as they provide the church, neither has had a conference completely focused on crisis intervention. Creating a conference as such, that is affordable for pastors and leaders to take their staff with them, would prepare them with skills and new ideas about crises. If there was a conference committee that could take the conference on the road around the world, that might even be a better answer for the churches that cannot afford to leave their city.

A crisis playbook would need to consist of how to navigate various crises, how to respond to media traditionally and digitally, how to manage staff in critical times, an idea box providing proven methods that have been tested and tried, website communication, live support service, sermon topics that help in crises, and more. After two years of the church trying to navigate through Covid without any proven strategy or metrics, it would be unwise not to capitalize off one of the most difficult periods in history that has ever been experienced. Many businesses seem to already have a crisis playbook, they just call it a crisis management plan. A company named TechGenix is a for-profit entity that is prepared for the next crisis. “A crisis management plan, as the name suggests, is a plan that helps reduce the impact of a crisis on your business. It includes a detailed set of steps

that prepare your organization to handle a crisis. You can use it to effectively communicate about the crisis to stakeholders such as employees, investors, and more.”¹²

There are eight items that TechGenix recommend looking into when your organization is ready to establish a crisis playbook. There are as follows: first, do a complete risk analysis. Second, create a crisis management team. Third, choose a crisis communication platform. The fourth is to establish crisis triggers, followed by create your crisis management action plans listed fifth. Sixth, plan for contingencies. Training your employees is the seventh, and lastly, the eighth item is to revise and update your plan regularly.¹³

Businesses understand that even though crises rarely come, it is in the best interest of the company to try to be prepared. It is recommended that the church borrows the practice of many companies, and prepares itself for the unimaginable. “The National Crisis Management Framework provides a comprehensive approach to understanding the components of a crisis or the 5Ps of crisis management: Predict, Prevent, Prepare, Perform and Post-Action and Assessment.”¹⁴ These five steps are a start for a church crises playbook. Many churches do not operate this way, and as a result, a good number of them closed their doors during the pandemic. There will always be more crises that the church will have to endure and be called upon as a trusted voice. It cannot be voiceless, timid, or shaken, but it must be resilient allowing the crises to fuel its fire for the time.

¹² Lavanya Rathnam, “Crisis Management Plan: What is it and Why is it Important,” TechGenix, Last modified June 6, 2022, <https://techgenix.com/crisis-management-plan/>.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

The church has survived years of oppression and the tragic deaths of its leaders, and yet it remains strong. It has not lost its fire. In fact, the church knows to think it is not strange when it is faced with difficult times. The next step is to take what previously existed in the mind, and create a playbook for the hands and feet. A plan will inject the staff and body with confidence in trying times.

Chapter Summary

The traditional church setting will always be around as long as it is an option. The question that remains is, to whom will it be an option? Each generation has an appetite for something different. The previous generation allows the latter to experience what life has been like, so an appreciation or depreciation is automatically created for their experiences. Whether their good encounters with ministries are retained, or not, is up to how well the middle and older generation of the time has advanced. The church has changed and continues to change as the world turns. The church will have to watch the pace that the world turns. The world does not dictate the church's mission, but its technological advances can aid the mission if it stays as close to up-to-date as possible. If not, the church will experience what Blockbusters, cassette tapes, CDs, and DVDs did as the world went digital. The aforementioned are now classics, and no longer a desired option by this new generation.

Baby Boomers remember them and appreciate them, generation X recalls them but depreciates them, millennials do not have any need for them, and generation Z does not have any knowledge of them. If the church does not evolve, it will be a classic record playing Christian music with members in rocking chairs. One key indicator for sure that

has kept the fire burning in the church has been strong leadership that has had the ability to pivot and project change.

The success of any organization hinges on the strength of its leaders. Craig Groeschel, of Life Church, has been one of those strong leaders who have stood tall through the modifications of the church through time. He and his team have been digital and have also gifted digital tools for free to churches around the world. His church is behind the bible app called You Version!

YouVersion.com has introduced an online Bible accessible by mobile phone. It places a digital Bible (in 41 different translations and in 22 languages) in the palm of your hand. You can share it online. The digital Bible changes how we connect with our faith! You can carry it around with you, and engage the Bible while at the airport, standing in line at the supermarket, or in the pew during Sunday morning church service. Will the technology of digital social media, including Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, impact the contemporary church and society like Gutenberg's printing press did in the 15th century? Only time will tell if we are on the verge of a new Reformation. However, one thing is certain. The church, definitely, cannot afford to sleep on this game-changing phenomenon known as social media.¹⁵

The church will have to give digital slack. It will have to loosen its reign in the digital space if it wants to remain an option, because people are starting to take responsibility for their faith in their own way. Often, the traditional church would discourage this behavior, and maybe even demonize it. That will have to change going forward now because people have more options than the church in their city. Knowing that the role of the pastor weighs significantly in the progress of the ministry, it would be wise going forward that boards and staff incorporate group therapy or therapy in general

¹⁵ Rev. Dr. Kenneth Lillard, *Social Media and Ministry: Sharing the Gospel in the Digital Age*, (Morrisville, NC: Lulu, 2011).

for its senior leader and, if the affordable, top-tiered staff. After witnessing the effects Covid-19 had on pastors and leaders, this should be heavily considered. The pastors cared for the members, church, personal family, career, and themselves. The responsibility was overwhelming for many during the pandemic. This created another crisis within a crisis. “The thing about ministry and life is that there’s no pause button.”¹⁶

Ministry never stops. Great staff are always coming up with ways to win for Jesus and their church. The downside to that is the great crash that comes from having the foot on the gas all the time. “Wilson suggests that the Church should give a bigger priority to time off and rest for staff members, noting, “Don’t wait for people to come to you burnt out before they get a sabbatical, before they get the rest [...] A lot of times people do finally get a sabbatical or time off, but it’s usually right before a breaking point.””

Healthy leadership is a necessity for the church and is also important to the new generation. Mental health is now one of the most discussed topics in the world and church.

In conclusion, the need for a crisis playbook for the church would be an incredible asset in the hands of any ministry. Covid-19 interrupted the world, but the world gave answers to the church instead of vice versa. Not to say that the church should not listen to the media, but the church's members went through a period of discomfort because of the lack of trusted voices on what it should do. A better-informed church has a better-informed member. Everyone was listening to everybody, and in the future, a plan would help shape a better narrative for the church and its constituents. Discomfort is not a

¹⁶ Barna, “ChurchPulse Weekly Conversations: Juli Wilson and Kayla Stoecklein on the Mental Health Struggles of Ministry,” Last modified May 12, 2021, <https://www.barna.com/research/cpw-wilson-stoecklein/>.

demon and will be experienced, however, it would be a waste of a crisis if the church does not learn from the traumatic experiences it endured. All leaders could use the help of a great crisis playbook. The playbook would also assist in checks and balances of the health of the ministry until the next time that a crisis strikes again.

Leaders see crisis as an opportunity to determine health. Leaders also recognize that a crisis acts like a thermometer. It tells the temperature of how we have led up to this point. The strengths and weaknesses of our preferred ministry model will soon be on full display. Many of us will soon learn the value of having a financial margin. We will find out just how strong our discipleship pathways and leadership pipelines are.¹⁷

¹⁷ Ridout, “3 Observations.”

Appendix A

List of backlashes for worshipping Jesus as opposed to Roman gods

Worshipping Jesus, and not a god from the pantheon, caused:

- slandering (stick figures with donkeys on the head)
- Ostracism: bared from the public square
- Physical persecution (local)
- Empirical executions (martyrs)(arrested)
- It was not empire-wide and continuous: there were large numbers of Christians that didn't get executed
- You had to reckon with the fact that you could end up a martyr before baptism
- For 250 years Christianity was illegal until Constantine passed the Edict of Milan.
- "The Edict of Milan was a proclamation that permanently established religious toleration for Christianity within the Roman Empire"¹

¹ Encyclopedia Britannica, s.v. "Edict of Milan," accessed December 22, 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Edict-of-Milan>

Appendix B

List of sectors deemed essential during Covid-19

Between the federal guidelines and state essential worker orders, a number of major sectors overlap including, but not limited to:

- Energy.
- Child care.
- Water and wastewater.
- Agriculture and food production.
- Critical retail (i.e. grocery stores, hardware stores, mechanics).
- Critical trades (construction workers, electricians, plumbers, etc.).
- Transportation.
- Nonprofits and social service organizations.
- ¹

¹ “Covid-19: Essential Workers in the States,” National Conference of State Legislators, <https://www.ncsl.org/research/labor-and-employment/covid-19-essential-workers-in-the-states.aspx> (accessed March 20, 2022).

Appendix C

List of data from Faces of Power

Some of the results are as follows:

- 25 people command the largest police forces. *14 are Black or Hispanic.*
- 29 prosecutors charge people with crimes in those jurisdictions. *12 are Asian, Black or Hispanic.*
- 24 people lead the Trump administration. *3 are Asian, Black or Hispanic.*
- 9 justices sit on the U.S. Supreme Court. *2 are Black or Hispanic.*
- 8 men are military chiefs. *1 is Black.*
- Of the people at the top of the 25 highest-valued companies, *6 are Asian or Black.*
- Of the people who head universities ranked in the top 25, *1 is Hispanic.*
- 15 people direct major news organizations. *3 are Black or Hispanic.*
- The 5 people who have the most influence over book publishing are *all White.*
- The people who edit the 10 most-read magazines are *all White.*
- 14 people influence most of the music that is produced and played. *2 are Black or Hispanic.*
- 25 people run the top TV networks and Hollywood studios. *3 are Black or Hispanic.*
- Of the people in charge of the 25 highest-valued fashion companies, *3 are Asian or Hispanic.*
- 99 people own professional baseball, basketball, and football teams. *6 are Asian, Black, or Hispanic.*
- 100 people write laws in the Senate. *9 are Asian, Black, or Hispanic.*
- 50 people are state governors. *3 are Asian, Hispanic, or Native American.*
- 431 people currently write laws in the House. *112 are Asian, Black, Hispanic, or Native American, or otherwise identify as a person of color.*¹

¹ Denise Lu, Jon Huang, Ashwin Seshagiri, Heyoun Park, Troy Griggs, “Faces of Power: 80% Are White, Even as U.S. Becomes More Diverse,” *New York Times*, September 9, 2020, <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/09/09/us/powerful-people-race-us.html>.

Appendix D

List of search engines for trends

1. Google Trends
2. Exploding Topics
3. Spark Toro Trending
4. Front Page Metrics
5. Feedly
6. Podcast Notes
7. Buzzsumo
8. Trends.co
9. Treendly
10. Product Hunt Topics
11. Trendwatchers
12. Conference Agenda
13. Publications' Editorial Calendar
14. Trendhunter

Appendix E

Ten Necessary Changes for the American Church to Have a Bright Future

1. Christian leaders need to be honest about what is happening in the American church and in their denomination and its churches, and personally lead the church forward with spirituality, chemistry, and strategy.
2. Established churches need to have the courage and commitment to pursue both health and growth. This dedication needs to come from pastoral and lay leaders and from members.
3. Christian leaders and churches need to accept and learn to thrive in the new world that is post-Christian, postmodern, and multi-ethnic.
4. The best pattern for the mission of the American church is the early church's attitude, model, and mission strategy to the Greco-Roman world.
5. In this new world, pastors need to upgrade their ministry gifts and skills, learning to articulate the message and mission of Jesus with passion, power, and wisdom.
6. Christians must engage their neighbors with a humble and listening attitude, relishing the new opportunities God has made available. A great way to begin is through the recovery of the historic Christian ministry of hospitality.
7. Established churches must embrace church planting as a primary method of passing.
8. Denominations need to learn how to develop turbocharged mammalian church planting structures while encouraging the initiative and interest in church planting to come from the grassroots level, both in established and new churches.
9. Pastors and leaders need to devote more energy to raising up and training young leaders in their churches, colleges, and community organizations.
10. The church needs to recognize the importance of the Holy Spirit in the life of the church.¹

¹ David T. Olson, *The American Church in Crisis: Groundbreaking Research Based on a National Database of Over 200,000 Churches*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2009).

Appendix F

Statistics provided by The Fuller Institute, George Barna, Lifeway, Schaeffer Institute of Leadership Development, Christianity Today, and Pastoral Care Inc.

- 38% of pastors are thinking of quitting the ministry, 51% from mainline denominations. (November 29, 2021) Of the 38%, almost half (46%) are under the of age 45.
- 50% of pastors are age 56 and above
- 72% of the pastors' report working between 55 to 75 hours per week. (Pre-Covid-19)
- 84% of pastors feel they are on call 24/7.
- 80% believe pastoral ministry has negatively affected their families. Many pastor's children do not attend church now because of what the church has done to their parents.
- 65% of pastors feel their family lives in a "glass house" and fear they are not good enough to meet expectations.
- 23% of pastors report being distant from their families.
- 78% of pastors report having their vacation and personal time interrupted by ministry duties or expectations.
- 65% of pastors feel they have not taken enough vacation time with their family over the last 5 years.
- 28% of pastors report having feelings of guilt for taking personal time off and not telling the church.
- 35% of pastors report the demands of the church to deny them from spending time with their families.
- 24% of pastors' families resent the church and its effect on their families.
- 22% of pastors' spouses report the ministry places undue expectations on their families.
- 66% of church members expect a minister and family to live at a higher moral standard than themselves.
- Moral values of a Christian are no different from those who consider themselves as non-Christians.
- The average American will tell 23 lies a day.
- 53% of pastors report that the seminary did not prepare them for the ministry.
- 90% of pastors report the ministry was completely different than what they thought it would be like before they entered the ministry.
- 45% of pastors spend 10-15 hours a week on sermon preparation.
- 85% of pastors report the use of the internet and other resources has improved their study time compared to when they first started their ministry.
- 50% of pastors state they spend 1 hour in prayer each day.
- 95% of pastors report not praying daily or regularly with their spouses.
- 57% of pastors believe they do not receive a livable wage.
- 57% of pastors are unable to pay their bills.

- 53% of pastors are concerned about their future family financial security.
- 75% of pastors report significant stress-related crises at least once in their ministry.
- 80% of pastors and 84% of their spouses have felt unqualified and discouraged in the role of pastors at least one or more times in their ministry.
- 52% of pastors feel overworked and cannot meet their church's unrealistic expectations.
- 54% of pastors find the role of a pastor overwhelming.
- 40% report serious conflict with a parishioner at least once in the last year.
- 80% of pastors expect conflict within their church.
- 75% of pastors report spending 4-5 hours a week in needless meetings.
- 35% of pastors battle depression or fear of inadequacy.
- 26% of pastors report being overfatigued.
- 28% of pastors report they are spiritually undernourished.
- Over 50% of pastors state the biggest challenge is to recruit volunteers and encourage their members to change (living closer to God's Word).
- 70% of pastors report they have a lower self-image now than when they first started.
- 70% of pastors do not have someone they consider to be a close friend.
- 27% of pastors report not having anyone to turn to for help in a crisis situation.
- 81% of pastors have been tempted to have inappropriate sexual thoughts or behavior with someone in the church but have resisted.
- 17% of pastors report inappropriately texting with a church member at some time in their ministry.
- 34% of pastors wrestle with the temptation of pornography or visit pornographic sites.
- 57% of pastors feel fulfilled but yet discouraged, stressed, and fatigued.
- 84% of pastors desire to have close fellowship with someone they can trust and confide with.
- Over 50% of pastors are unhealthy, overweight, and do not exercise.
- The profession of "Pastor" is near the bottom of a survey of the most-respected professions, just above "car salesman".
- Many denominations are reporting an "Empty Pulpit Crisis". They do not have a shortage of ministers but have a shortage of ministers desiring to fill the role of a pastor.
- 71% of churches have no plan for a pastor to receive a periodic sabbatical.
- 66% of churches have no lay counseling support.
- 30% of churches have no documentation clearly outlining what the church expects of their pastor.
- 1 out of every 10 pastors will actually retire as a pastor.

New Pastoral Statistics

- Barna reports 38% of pastors are thinking of quitting the ministry, 51% from mainline denominations. November 29, 2021

- Covid-19 brought many things to a breaking point. The Ministry can take its toll. It's never been this bad. Edify leaders, October 2021.¹

¹ Pastoral Care, Inc., “Statistics in Ministry,” Accessed December 23, 2022.
<https://www.pastoralcareinc.com/statistics/>.

Appendix G

CHURCH MEETINGS

1. Virtual All Staff Meetings
2. Virtual Departmental Staff Meetings
3. Virtual Event Planning (cross-pollination of departments for checks and balances)
4. Email Direct Staff needed for pre-recording responsibilities (days in advance)
5. Associate Pastoral Checkup and Catchup calls for church membership (share ministry announcements)

VIRTUAL TOOLS

(Don't use any personal accounts. Your parishioners and visitors need to know where to find you at all times, especially in a crisis)

1. Cameras and Camera Crews
2. Microsoft Teams
3. Social Media Providers (Apps, Facebook, Instagram, Tik Tok, YouTube,
4. Texting Services
5. Zoom Service

VIRTUAL CONCEPTS

1. Develop creative content and innovative ways to share content
2. Off-site content
3. On-site content
4. Traditional Church Recordings
5. Non-Traditional Church Recordings (interviews, talk shows, game shows, music showcases, comedy shows, book releases, etc.)

CONSIDERATIONS

1. Service length (60 -90 minutes max)
2. Pre-Service Host (10 -15 minutes) Post-Service Host (5 -10 minutes)
3. Children's TV through the ministry's social platform
4. Use the ministry platform for video announcements to keep members informed

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