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# COVID-19 is the Reset Moment the Church Needs

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Church Extension Plan

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**H**ave you tried resetting it? That's usually the first question the IT Help Desk — for me, usually my children — asks when I call for help when my smartphone is not working. It seems too obvious and simple to be true, but resetting my phone usually fixes the problem. It restores my phone to its original factory settings, retroactively correcting any glitches that may have developed with use.

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced the Church to go through a hard factory reset. From Sunday services to communion, discipleship and evangelism, everything we thought we “knew” about how church was supposed to be done has flown out the window. I sympathize with my fellow pastors who are doing their best to still minister to their congregations during these uncertain times.

Yet, I believe there's an upside to the ecclesiastical upheaval we are experiencing. The church is returning to its default settings, and, though it may not be painless or easy, it will be good in the long run.

Here are three ways churches and ministries will benefit from this hard reset:

## 1. We are going back to John 3:16

The most important setting reset for the church to come out of this crisis is a renewed love and commitment for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. **Seasons of hardship and uncertainty, though unpleasant, often bring clarity and perspective and remind us of our true calling as followers of Jesus.**

Too often do we forget that the Gospel is the main focus when things are going well and life is easy. We get derailed by new ideas for ministry — a new app for discipleship or a conference to bring big speakers and crowds — that are good and

worthwhile but distract us from our primary job. Crises strip the church down to its most basic calling of telling the world the good news of Jesus, and this message of life and love is more urgent and needed now than ever as millions of people are looking for hope and peace.

## 2. We are going back to Matthew 25

Jesus said the second most important commandment is to love our neighbor as ourselves (Matthew 22). This command is often interpreted with “neighbor” meaning a brother or sister in the faith, but Jesus clearly meant *anyone* who is in need in our sphere of influence. He emphasized this point a few chapters later, when He told the parable of the king separating the sheep from the goats. “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me,” the king says in Jesus' parable (Matthew 25:40).

**This season is an opportunity to remember the second commandment and put it into practice like never before.** For example, our church in Northern California has reached out to elders who are particularly vulnerable to COVID-19 and provided meals for students who are out of school. Many of these children depend on school meals for their sustenance. Our ministry to our neighbors grew exponentially during this time, and we don't want it to be temporary. We want to return to Matthew 25 and make sure it's a part of our church's DNA.

## 3. We are going back to Acts 2

Pastors often say that the Church is the people, the body of Christ, but in practice we have focused on maximizing Sunday church service attendance and launching new church plants and campuses,

all with the goal of reaching as many people as possible. **God wants us to dream big, to believe He indeed is “able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think”** (Ephesians 3:20), but let’s not forget that today’s global church of more than 2 billion professing believers began in a home (Acts 2).

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many churches to abandon their traditional models of large gatherings and events and has compelled us to remember that our homes are the foundational building blocks of the church. It’s easy to gloss over the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our homes and families when we have grand schemes, but we need to redirect our attention to the spiritual health of our family units: Are our families empowered by the Holy Spirit, living out their full potential in Christ? Are our homes

defined by love, joy, peace, and the fruits of the Spirit? This could be an opportunity for the Holy Spirit to launch a renewed awakening that will sweep across our nation and the world — and it will all begin in our homes. ■

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**Rev. Dr. Samuel Rodriguez** is president of the National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, executive producer of “Breakthrough” with 20th Century Fox, and bestselling author of “You Are Next: Destroy What Has Paralyzed You and Never Miss Your Moment Again” (Charisma House Publishing). CNN and FOX News have called him “the leader of the Hispanic Evangelical movement,” and TIME magazine nominated him among the 100 most influential leaders in America.