



Our Response to COVID-19: Will it Destroy Us or Define Us?

Pastor Joey Furjanic

Lead Pastor | The Block Church | Philadelphia, PA
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Church Extension Plan

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For pastors and leaders like myself, the COVID-19 crisis has changed everything in a moment. My church was in a season of growth and momentum when the pandemic hit. We were preparing to make some key hires and even launch our fourth location in Philadelphia. Then, in one moment, everything stopped.

While we know COVID-19 will pass, we also know there will be other crises in the future. How do we not only handle this crisis, but also learn from it? How can we prepare today for new crises tomorrow?

Our reaction to this moment in history can define us or destroy us. I believe that, if we lean in as leaders, it will define us.

Each Crisis is a Chapter in the Story of Your Destiny

There's an old English proverb that reads, "Cometh the hour, cometh the man." How we respond to our communities in this moment — how we think, how we plan, how we move, how we act — will be what defines us as leaders. The preparedness and passion we utilize today will far outlast the pain and problems we might face as a fallout from a crisis. Our reaction to this crisis will either promote us or it will plummet us.

This moment in time cannot and should not be wasted. What are you doing to prepare your staff and congregation for the challenges ahead? How will this chapter in the story of your destiny define you?

Each Crisis Presents Countless Opportunities

I've been encouraging our team, and myself, that this is the moment we need to invest in people — to look for opportunities to connect and collaborate. Now is the time to take advantage of opportunities that maybe we haven't been able

to focus on amid the routines of life, business, and ministry. You will certainly need to catch your breath, but as you settle into this new and changing reality, look around! I believe businesses and churches who function at a high level in this crisis will come out of it stronger than ever.

Are you going to step up and step into the opportunities available in this season? Will you seize the moment? We may never experience another crisis quite like the one we are confronting now — let's not waste it!

Each Crisis Enhances Innovation

Like most churches, we have had to move our entire organization online. This forced us to innovate and think out of the box — to reach new people, to train from a distance. Innovation loves a crisis, and what you innovate, others will emulate. We need to look around at our fellow pastors and churches, to learn from one another. Many great companies emerge from crisis stronger than before, because they adapted and opted to innovate.

How will we value and develop people in this season of digital connection? How will we adapt to the crisis of today and innovate for the future?

Each Crisis Separates the Leaders from the Followers

Leaders will rise to the top in a crisis. They will provide a sense of calm and direction, and people will naturally begin to lean on them. If you are a leader of leaders, you need pay attention to who steps up in this crisis. Watch for who may be ready to launch another site or step into an executive role. In addition, check in on your own leadership. Ask yourself, "How am I leading? With vision and confidence? Or, with panic and stress?" A crisis will reveal what kind of leader you are and what kind you wish to be.

There is a lot of worry and fear among our

communities right now, and the last several weeks have changed our everyday lives dramatically. Utilize this time to learn about your leaders and about yourself.

Each Crisis Illuminates Who is With You and Who is Just Around You

The weeks and months ahead of us are bound to bring more challenges and complications, so remind your staff of your mission. As the economy and employment become more fragile, we can't afford to pay people whose passion hinges on a paycheck. Rest is important and necessary, but at the end of the day we need a team that is "all in," no matter what the future holds. We need to know who is with us versus who is just around us.

Will your people be prepared to stand beside you? Are they about the mission of your ministry? Crisis forces us to draw a line in the sand and say, "If you are with me, I need you now more than ever." I'd rather have a few individuals who are fully pursuing our mission than multiple people just sticking around for a paycheck.

Action Steps

1. Utilize data, but go with your gut — You won't always have all the information (and it could change any moment), so trust your gut, your guiding compass.

2. Collaborate and cooperate — People need relationship in this season. Look for opportunities to invest in your community and partner with new individuals and ministries.

3. Be bold and decisive, but also calculated — Now is not the time to shrink back! You will make mistakes, but continue to take risks and involve people who can speak into the situation.

4. Be authentic, but not panicked — Be real and vulnerable with your people. Tell them you're struggling, but also lead with wisdom and strength.

5. Think survival and growth simultaneously — I've told every one of our team members, "We can grow through this, and we can help people grow through this." Remember we can do much more than survive COVID-19; we can return bigger and better than before! ■