

Leading In A Crisis

Context

This resource has been written for leadership groups and mentoring groups to help them navigate the current crisis and reflect on their leadership for shared learning in the midst of it. It is designed to be done on Zoom (or equivalent) and aimed to take about 90mins. The intention is to send these notes out in advance to enable leaders time to engage with the topic and also personally reflect. Preparation time will really enable greater participation. The original draft had a number of questions, the reality is that with a group you only need a few key questions to generate conversation and reflection. I have included other personal reflection questions for the participants to prepare or reflect afterwards.

Our understanding of this particular crisis is evolving all the time, as will our leadership through it. This was originally written in the early weeks of the crisis and is offered as an organic tool in the midst of learning. No doubt as it is used it will be adapted and we will notice and learn new things. We are all learning together and this document is a work in progress, to raise questions and reflect together as we go through phases of this crisis.

The structure is as follows:

1. Scripture intro
2. Set parameters for the conversation & mutual learning
3. Introduce the idea of phases of leadership through a crisis & give headlines
4. Get them talking soon, with opening question
5. Outline the 4 phases section by section, with 1 question at the end of each phase
6. A table outlining the 4 phases in more detail, with space for additions
7. Further questions for personal reflection are at the end

There are question boxes at the end of each section, enabling you as the one chairing the group to make notes and highlight conversation areas to dig into more deeply.

Starting with Scripture - Luke 21

Luke's account of Holy Week focusses on Jesus' interaction with the city of Jerusalem. Luke's gospel has followed Jesus' journey to Jerusalem from Ch.9-19. When he arrives there, he weeps over the city and combats its corrupt religious leaders.

In Ch.21, after the stunning story of the widow's offering, he then gives a rallying call to the people to wake up spiritually. He prophesies the fall of Jerusalem, persecution of the church and his second coming. The language is apocalyptic, the people of the ancient world looked for signs and events to make meaning of God's dealings with the world.

Jesus uses apocalyptic warnings, to say 'Wake up and stay awake!' When we consider leadership in a crisis, this is a key message that he brings us. As leaders we first need to wake up, then wake others up and then stay awake.

This is a summary of Jesus' instructions:

- Keep your eyes on Jesus, don't be led astray
- Don't let fear control you
- Persecution is to be expected - it increases our passion for the gospel
- 'Straighten up, raise your heads' - live with integrity and courage to be a beacon of hope
- Don't get distracted by excessive food, alcohol & the cares of this life
- Stay awake (spiritually), praying for strength

Intro

Leading through a crisis, draws on many other aspects of leadership. One thing I have noticed leading through this pandemic has been the phases of leadership - at each stage we need to draw on different inner resources of leadership. Some of those will come more naturally to us than others; to be a leader is to be in tune with God, flexible, compassionate, alert and courageous.

I have identified 4 phases of leadership and the purpose of this study is to discuss each phase, learn from other leaders about what they have learned and let the Holy Spirit speak into our current situation, to empower and direct us as leaders.

I pray through the Lord's prayer phrase by phrase every day. Through the past few weeks, I have dwelt on 'Your will be done'. I've become more aware that as leaders, we

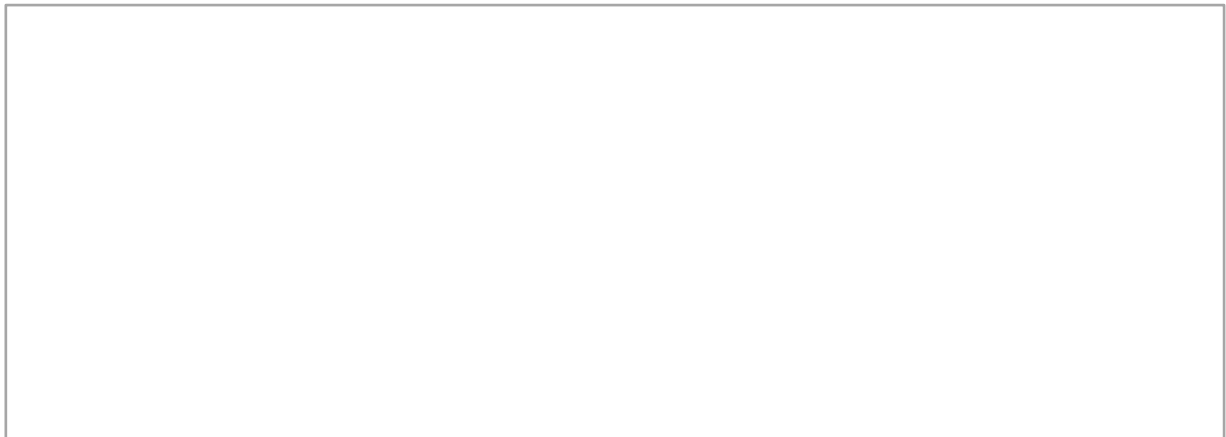
are always making it up as we go along. I don't always know if I'm getting it right, but by surrendering daily to God and asking for his guidance, I can trust him to steer me to use my time and energy in fulfilling his will.

Phases of leadership in a crisis:

1. Immediate response
2. Transitioning
3. Sustaining
4. Rebuilding

Intro question (for the group):

What have you learned about your leadership over the past few weeks?

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Definition of each stage:

1. Immediate response

The bomb drops, the pandemic strikes, the disaster happens.

The first call is safety, everyone reduces down to the most basic level of Maslow's triangle, survival. The leadership instinct kicks in immediately, fuelled by adrenaline.

What is needed in this phase?

Clarity, calm, clear, confident, cancelling, clinging.

- It's time to clarify core values and use them as an emergency criteria for decisions
- Cling to what matters, jettison what doesn't
- No time to overanalyse - ignore the voice of critics, listen to your guts
- Assess who is vulnerable
- Delegate quickly where possible
- Ignore the critics, their voice is of no value right now

What went well/badly in the first phase in your context?

2. Transition

The immediate danger may still be prevalent, so this means bringing the necessary change for everyone's safety, helping others adjust to rapid change, communicating that there is a plan (even if you haven't made it yet), re-setting expectations to key parties.

Recognise the polarity, between panic/fear and denial of reality.

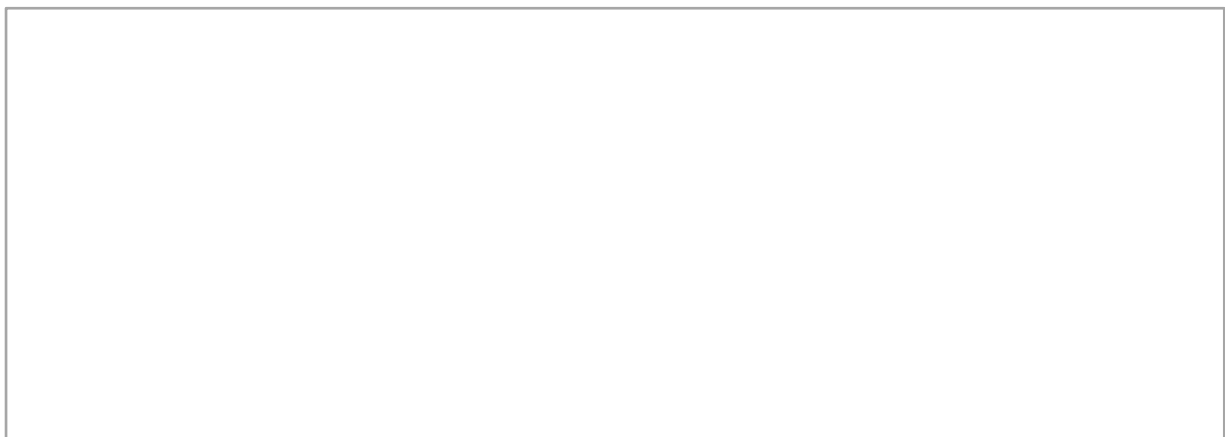
Set the narrative. If there are critical or divisive voices, set the narrative of 'a different season', to bring people into the same space.

What is needed?

- Discipline, teamwork, thanks and encouragement, listening, courage
- Set the culture for what is valued if going into 'lock-down'
- Self awareness. What is my unique gift, what other gifts surround me?

What did you find difficult in the Transition phase (for those 'leading from the second chair')?

How did you handle the range of responses to the crisis in your context? (for incumbents)?



3. Sustaining

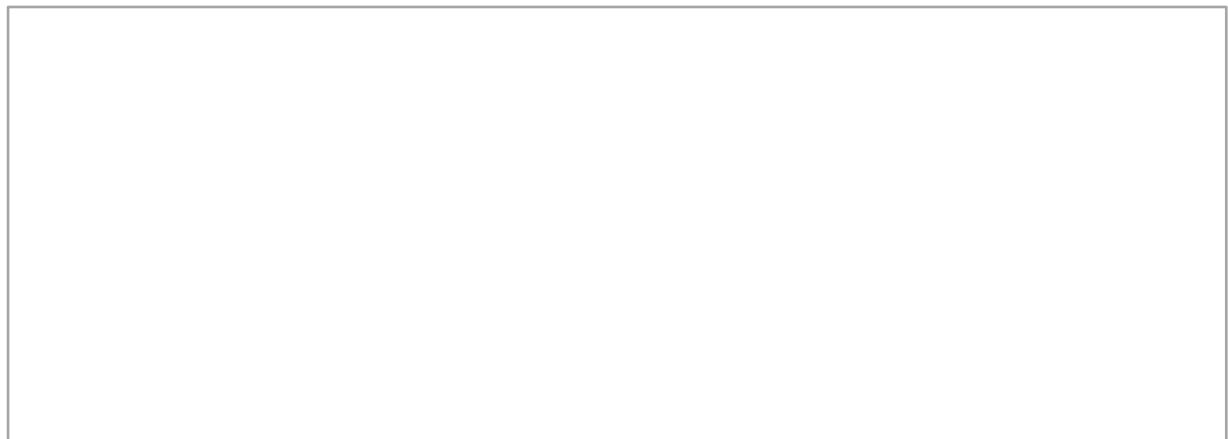
The danger might last a while, normal life is suspended, new rhythms of life are established. There is a strange mixture of those 'on the front line' dealing with danger or death and those stuck inside, dealing with frustration and restrictions.

This is a time to 'fix and repair', the additional time gives space for that. But conflict resolution is harder without physical proximity, so keep short accounts and be clear.

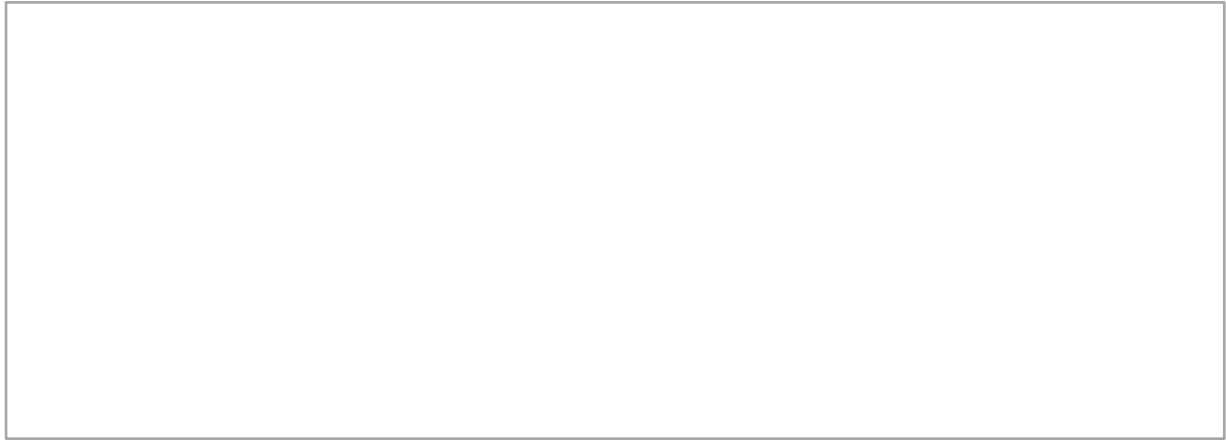
What is needed?

- Dig deep in prayer and the bible
- Reflect, rest, renew
- Detox from the pre-crisis patterns of life, which we now see as dysfunctional
- Grieve what has been lost
- Pray, where you are powerless
- Intercessory prayer is key
- Grace, pace, hope

What might God want to be doing in you and your church in this phase, which isn't possible in 'normal time'?

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How can the church come through this season enriched and healthier?



During this time, it is likely that for many, internal 'junk' in our hearts/subconscious will rise to the surface. God will use this opportunity to heal and restore us deeper than normal life allows, this may be emotionally turbulent. Encourage the group to give space for that in their lives and grace for others who are going through that. Validate that.

4. Rebuilding

- Seeds of new life. Vision for what is to come. A leader's role is to clarify a new vision and rally others with hope.
- Let what has died, stay dead, don't go back, it's gone and people will need help letting go. Be honest with your churches about that, honesty helps them let go.
- Widen their horizons, people have been locked into survival mode, they need to raise their eyes, to start to imagine the future.
- Be prepared to answer the questions people will be asking as they rebuild with you.

What preparation for rebuilding can you do now?

What can't you do now?

The following table is a more detailed summary of the 4 phases, add or edit as you see fit:

	Immediate	Transition	Sustaining	Rebuilding
Key action	Decisions	Communication	Prayer	Envisioning
Role	Warrior	Administrator	Spiritual guide	Visionary
Key words	Calm, focus, confident	Balanced, expectations, rhythms, discipline	Rest, renew, pray, learn, dig, release Detox	Inspire, hope, collaboration, blueprints
Priorities	Safety, jettison, values	Organising, listening, encouraging, clarifying	Prayer, bible, space, support, grieve, serve, assess old priorities	Reimagining, reassessing, resource allocation
Listen to...	Your guts, those closest, authorities	Those you respect, team members, those you love	God, your own heart, those in trauma (phase 1)	Stories, prophecies, creatives
Hope	It's not the end of the world, survival	We'll get through this, light at the end of the tunnel, God is at work	Resurrection life God sowing seeds	What can we build together? What is possible now?
Fears	Death! Dangers, desolation	Getting it wrong, Lack	We're stuck in this, I'll miss this opportunity & go back to the old Deep buried chronic fears	We'll go back to the old We can't do this The danger will come back
Mission	The church is here and cares about its community Expresses love in action	Public presence at the place of need New patterns of worship, accessible to non-believers Avoid glib theological answers	Intercession Create new channels for sharing the gospel as people ask about life & death Digital presence for seekers	Be active in public rebuilding Welcoming for those who have checked us out online New forms of church More missional
Messages	It's ok Things have changed Do this to be safe	This is the plan Re-set expectations	God is in charge, It's ok to cry Cling to God Detox is good	Vision for the future The new world will be better
Prayer	Help! Empathy for those in distress	Give me wisdom Your will be done	Contemplative, deep heart, Spirit-led Where I am now powerless, you are powerful Repentance come back to you first	Guide us, lead us, show us the new Your kingdom come

Personal Reflection

Questions for personal reflection in preparation or after the session.

(Some of these could be used in the conversation, if time, but offer them all to enable others to reflect personally):

Phase 1

What did you learn about yourself (and those working with you) in that first phase?

Where did you have to battle fear?

Phase 2

What roles did you naturally gravitate to on your team?

Where did self-doubt or comparison slip in?

How easy did you find it to set a new rhythm and pattern of life?

What did the rapid change teach you about your own inbuilt priorities?

Phase 3

Have you given yourself permission to 'slow down'?

What is rising up from your subconscious as you settle into a more static mode of being?

How is your prayer life, in this powerless time?

Phase 4

How can you prepare now as a leader, for the new world?

What new vision is God planting in your heart?

What seeds can you plant now?

How can we let things die well?

Are you ready to respond to the questions your community will ask?