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What's Next?

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What's next?

That's a question I've asked myself throughout my life, especially when I have reached major milestones. And like me, it's probably a question you probably are asking right now as you think about what's next for your church as it prepares to safely reopen in a COVID-19 landscape that will have an impact for months, if not years, to come.

Here are my answers to that question. You will notice they are not a five-step plan or highly technical in nature. They are critical dynamics you need to consider as you make decisions and plans about what you are going to do when it is safe to begin the process of reopening your church.

Accept the fact that things aren't ever going to go back to the way they were. You probably have longed these past few weeks for things to go back to the way they were before COVID-19. I have wished that at times as well. However, the fact of the matter is that it can't happen because the virus has changed life forever. What is more, I don't want it to happen. I want something better. I want Jesus' new normal, not my old normal.

Don't dare waste this crisis. Whenever I find myself in crisis, I use most of my spiritual, emotional and physical energy just trying to survive. However, I also know that I have had the opportunity to learn and grow in every crisis I've ever gone through. Your church has learned a lot during this crisis – don't waste it by focusing just on surviving. Strive to thrive as you implement what you have learned, matured spiritually, and grown a bigger comfort zone doing things you never would have done previously.

Don't settle for just a relaunch – experience a new launch. You probably already are at work planning on a relaunch when given the green light to open. But what if you were to think about it in a whole new way. Not as a relaunch, but as a new launch. Think about how you have learned to do new things. Think about all those people who have gotten in touch with your church while you've been online. Think about the fresh movement of the Holy Spirit that will allow your church to be like a brand new church. You have a chance not just to start again, but to start fresh as if for the first time.

Embrace your opportunity to share Jesus' love with those who are hungering for God. COVID-19 has so completely turned people's lives upside down that they realize they are not able to make it through life on their own. They are sensing that there's just got to be more to life than what they can control and do. And even if they have a hard time naming it, they eventually realize it's a deep hungering for God. Your church has an amazing opportunity to connect with these people at the most important level possible if you have a deep hunger to grow as a Jesus follower, think it's singularly important for people to have a relationship with Christ, and care enough about people that you long for them to experience God's gift of love and life in Christ.

The "What's next?" question is about getting ready to safely reopen. The "What's next?" question is about taking care of business so you are ready to safely reopen when it's time. But perhaps most importantly, the "What's next?" question involves deep spiritual discernment so you can deal with those things that matter most when you do safely reopen.