



# What Now?

## Reflection and Discernment

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A leader knows the way, shows the way, and goes by the way.” But where do leaders turn when facing uncharted territory? Where do we seek wisdom? Who are we going to follow? Who’s going to deliver us from this pandemic?

Perhaps the familiar words of Jesus, “I am the way, the truth, and the life,” are significant in today’s context. No one human is uniquely qualified to offer leadership today. But we can continue to look to Jesus, whose power—the same yesterday, today, and forever—is able to heal and deliver us.

The global pandemic has caused many adversities. It is not just a health crisis, but an economic, social, and mental health crisis too. Sometimes it’s hard to see God in the midst of all this. Why did this happen?

As followers of Christ, we are called to help people in need. We are called to love in the most difficult times. We are called to show people the way of Jesus. When the world is broken, polarized, anxious, and misinformed, it is our part to speak the truth about God’s world.

”Telling the truth about God’s world is the most powerful thing that can be done,” says New Testament scholar N. T. Wright. “Jesus is speaking God’s new creation into existence.” In other words, the world is broken, but God calls us to be wise humans, working as co-creators, fulfilling God’s dream.

So what are the practical steps forward? How does our theology inform our practice as we seek to follow Jesus amid this pandemic? What can we learn from Scripture? How do we make sense of our current situation as individuals and as a community?

### ACCEPTANCE

*In this world, you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world. —John 16:33 NIV*

The result of an acceptance is peace, while the fruits of denial are anger and depression. Acceptance of our pain, suffering, and trauma is the first step for healing.

While some may have experienced great loss, most of us have experienced some sort of trauma. If trauma is not addressed and honored, re-traumatization is likely to occur.

As leaders, we want to ensure that our trauma, and our collective trauma as a congregation, is processed in healthy



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ways, preventing further traumatization. This involves getting to the roots of the issues, not just addressing symptoms. As Christians, we have access to God’s restorative power through Jesus for this work.

- What are the areas of our lives that have been difficult to accept during the pandemic?
- What pain, fear, and trauma has surfaced?

### SPIRITUAL MATURITY

*And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.*

*—Philippians 1:9-11 NIV*

The journey toward maturity as believers does not end with baptism. To be like Christ, to have spiritual maturity, should be the goal of every Christian. Having the ability to discern, being adaptable, and doing what is right are all evidence of maturity.

Maybe people don't want to hear the words or phrases *new normal*, *social distancing*, and *toilet paper shortage* anymore, but those words are new terms that we learned during the pandemic. Even the word *unprecedented* bears meaning that we should change our way of thinking, acting, and even doing church together.

God does not want us to be spiritual settlers in this world, and instead invites us to embark on a spiritual journey, seeking to be in tune with the Holy Spirit.

- What evidence of spiritual maturity do you see in your life?
- How do you discern being in step with the Spirit?

### JOURNEY MINDSET

*For we are strangers before you and sojourners, as all our fathers were. Our days on the earth are like a shadow, and there is no abiding.* —1 Chronicles 29:15 ESV

Life is a spiritual journey, and as with every journey there is a destination. As a follower of Jesus, our journey to eternal life began at the time we accepted Jesus as our God and Savior.

One of my favorite things to do with my family is to take a road trip. But there is always traffic, sometimes there is a detour, and sometimes I make wrong turns. So, too, with our spiritual journey; there are ups and downs. Sometimes we get stuck or make a bad decision.

This pandemic is not our destination; it's only a temporary place where we can calibrate, meditate, and find meaning on our journey. God wants to use us to restore this broken world, embracing our calling.

- What new things have you been doing in ministry because of the pandemic?
- What hinders you from having a journey mindset?

### COMMUNITY

*Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.* —Galatians 6:2 NIV

The Acts of the Apostles records that the early church had a unity of heart and mind; they did not even claim private property but instead shared what they had. And God's grace was powerfully at work in them all.

The church is not building, but the assembly of believers who commit in the way of Jesus. The way we gather may change because of COVID-19, but the relationship aspect is still there because we share life as a body of Christ. In the pandemic, the church bears witness to the world.

The best testimony to the truth of the gospel is the quality of our life together. In the pandemic, our relationships with God and other members of the body of Christ are being tested.

We need to develop, reshape, and practice the way we do community together, determining what is essential and what is not. Our rituals, programs, and events should make us more loving toward one another; if not, then change must happen.

- What practices are sustaining relationships in your church community?
- What needs to change?

As followers of Christ, we know that God wants to restore this broken world. God is working to equip us, enabling us to be God's coworkers to help people in need and to show people the way of Jesus.

God's invitation to us is to grow spiritually, becoming mature Christians, taking the spiritual journey so that we will not only find God, but also find friends—siblings in Christ—fellow sojourners. This is the church on the move, the community, the family in Christ. This church is not a monument but the global and local movement.



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