



Thriving, Not Just Surviving

by Pastor Doug Lutz

But blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit. --Jeremiah 17:7-8

It has been said that if you aim for the stars you might hit the moon, but if you aim for nothing, you'll hit it with amazing accuracy. I have yet to meet a person whose singular aim in life was to live a life of mediocrity. And yet, so many people seem to live life like this... in survival mode. It's like the realities of life have knocked the wind out of them and they can't seem to catch their breath. Do you ever feel that way? Do you ever feel like you're just hanging in there? Like you're not making a splash in life but you're also not making any waves?

We've all been there. I know I have. In fact, the gravitational pull toward the mundane is so strong that unless I remind myself often that I have been created by God on purpose and for a purpose, the slide from thriving to surviving happens quickly. And it can happen to goal setters and couch sitters alike.

Just last month, Kaycee, my wife, observed that I didn't seem happy. When I asked her what she meant she simply said, "you're not thriving, you're just surviving." She went on to explain that I was becoming like a man in a prison who could only see bars and not stars when I looked out the window of my cell. Ouch. Really? But she was right. Although there are several things that have contributed to this state, the general busyness of doing and going and striving which I mistook as thriving, blinded me to the fact that I was actually just surviving.

The silver lining for me and likely most who read this is that as life has been forcibly slowed down due to COVID-19, we all have time to reevaluate the trajectory of our lives. We all have time to invest more intentionally in relationships that matter most to us. We all have time to consider new opportunities that we were too busy to think about before this crisis. And most importantly, we all have space enough to be still and know that God is the God of it all, not me... not you.

As this challenging season continues, we can take comfort knowing the Lord is with us. The prophet Jeremiah had it right. If we are going to thrive as blessed people, our roots must go deeper into the living water of confident trust in God; favoring stillness over ceaseless activity. Then and only then will we be free from worry and live genuinely fruitful lives.

So here's a prayer challenge to consider: In stillness before God, ask Jesus to reveal any source other than his still waters that might be draining you; is there a filter of denial over the eyes of your heart that might find you just surviving, not thriving?

How can we help you get through this difficult season by not only surviving, but *thriving*? [Click here](#) if you would like to share your thoughts or questions.

Stay Hungry for Life!

Things I'm Thinking About

I've decided to add this section to share some of the things I am hearing, learning and thinking about especially as we move through our current crisis and into a re-calibrated future that lies beyond it. Although we don't know for sure when we can meet again face-to-face, we need to prepare ourselves now for what might be different later. So here is one thought I want to put forward this week to consider and prayer through.

Confusing Methods with Mission: This moment in time has got me thinking about the “why” about our being connected. As a global church, we all have the same mission of reaching the lost and becoming disciples who are engaged in obeying the teachings of Jesus. This is Jesus' kingdom mandate. But on a local level, is mission driving who we are and what we do or have methods taken over our “why”?

In the words of Carey Nieuwhof, “stuck and dying churches cling to their methods and

sacrifice the mission in the process. Growing and thriving churches rethink their methods to advance their mission.” This statement may be a bit hard to swallow, but when churches think more about managing resources or preserving a particular heritage or fight hard to maintain the past “way we have always done things”, they have lost sight of their mission and are on a trajectory toward irrelevance and eventual death. But it doesn’t have to be this way.

If it is true that crisis is the cradle of innovation, we certainly have been experiencing it. And if we stop innovating and adjusting how we reach out and connect to others with the good news of Jesus, when we get back to our facilities we risk losing sight of our “why” for being the church. Worse yet, if we don’t think about this now and decide to step forward into a new future, we will likely go back to a myopic posture of maintaining what is most familiar and comfortable to “us” at the expense of reaching the lost and disenfranchised. So, here are some questions to personally ponder about mission and methods:

Questions: What might God be saying to you about your life as a disciple? Do you know your God-given place and purpose in his kingdom? Are you more focused on methods or mission? How might Jesus want to engage a church-wide conversation about being on mission before going back to Sunday or "church as usual" routines?

Want to share your thoughts, insights or questions!

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