CMNI
on
COVID–19 and the Church

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GIVE A MAN A FISH AND YOU FEED HIM FOR A DAY;

*TEACH A MAN **HOW** TO FISH . . .*
AND YOU FEED HIM FOR A LIFETIME!

That ancient proverb still applies today. So, the **primary purpose** of our time together is in the "how to fish" lane or, more precisely, **how to care** for the fish — or the *sheep* — as it were, but more about that in a moment . . .

Hello, dear friends! My name is John Bosman — and ***thank you*** for joining me today!

The **Coronavirus**, or **COVID-19**, has taken the globe by surprise and, unexpectedly, all but forced the Church to go "underground" — even here in America. As public health officials recommended community actions to reduce its spread, most local churches were not prepared for this sudden shift. COVID-19 relegated "business as usual" obsolete.

For the past two weekends, as most church buildings stood closed and empty, many local churches were able to *livestream* their services. Their people watched from home or gathered for "watch parties" in small groups. Those churches who were prepared for electronic and online giving remained able to receive tithes and offerings. While many local congregations had all those logistics covered, many more did not.

That was then.

This unknown, unwelcome intruder has forced many into the deep end of learning how to *livestream* services — one way or another. Quickly, an old adage became new:

The Message never changes, but our methods must!

With each news conference, it becomes clearer that this scenario will continue for who knows how long. Moving forward, in this present reality — and as the novelty of e-church and watch parties fade — another reality emerges:

There is every possibility
that we might start losing touch with our people!

That is a sobering — if not alarming — realization. So — texts, emails, podcasts, Facebook, Instagram, and such aside — how do we respond to the prospect of losing touch with our people? Is "losing touch" a foregone conclusion or do we have options?

And that's why we are here today!

For the **next few minutes**, allow me to offer a few **actionable suggestions** to counter this looming predicament.

History has taught us that we humans cannot survive without meaningful, personal relationships. **Very soon**, people are going to start missing the hugs, handshakes, and fellowship of their church family. People need more than generic words of encouragement that the church sends to an extensive database.

The **missing link** is **communication**. We are talking to them, but they don't have the opportunity to speak with us. It doesn't matter how much life has changed or how many modern gadgets we have — basic human needs have not changed.

To counter this undesirable outcome — and in a heartfelt attempt to be helpful . . .

Let me propose these simple action steps:

1. Configure a simple yet straightforward structure — within your existing structure.

You may wonder *how* you would do this. Well, that depends greatly on the size of your congregation.

For example . . .

Let's suppose you have **a church of 100 people** and, say, **7 deacons**.

➢ Consider your **deacons** as your **care leaders** for this effort.

➢ Assign **5 households** to each care leader.

➢ This approach will include **more than 100 people** in your care circle — and here's how:

- **7** deacon households
- Plus, **35** member households
- Totals **42** households
- The **national average** household in 2019 = **2.52** people
- **42** households x **2.52** people per household = **105 people**

Another example . . .

If you have a **large church**, you likely have elders, deacons, and other leaders.

- ➢ If you consider them as **your leadership team** for this effort, then the configuration would look like this:
  - ▪ Appoint **12 people**, who are spiritually mature, to serve as the **care shepherds** — your first level of leadership.
  - ▪ Assign **5 care leaders** to each care shepherd — your second level of leadership.
  - ▪ Then, assign **5 households** to each care leader.

- ➢ The **people connections** will now look like this:
  - ▪ **12** care shepherd households
  - ▪ Plus, **60** care leader households
  - ▪ Plus, **300** member households
  - ▪ Totals **372 households** — or more than **900 people**

Mega churches would add a third level of leadership, which would reach more than **4,700** people.

So, decide where your church falls within this range and simply adjust the size of your leadership team accordingly.

Also, if you have **small groups** (or cell groups or community groups) in your church, those group leaders might be well suited already to serve as care leaders — or, at least, you could ask them to call each household in their group.

2. Keeping Everyone Connected

➤ **Lead Pastor**:

- Notify all your church people (by e-mail, text, etc.) of the **care outreach** you have launched to stay connected to them during this season.

- Let them know **they are important** and that **you** — their pastor — **personally care** about them.

- Notify them that an elder, deacon, or other leader — people who are helping you to launch the care outreach — will reach out to them.

- Reassure them that nobody will come to their home.

➤ **Care leaders** (i.e., elders, deacons, etc.):

- Contact each assigned household regularly.

- The **first contact** should be a personal phone call.
  (Calling one household per day will reach your entire circle every week.)

- Follow-up contacts may be by text, e-mail, etc.

- Make a personal phone call to every household once every two weeks until further notice.

3. The Conversation

➢ The conversation should be brief, yet warm and cordial.

➢ **Recommended outline** (for when care leaders call their households):

- Initial greeting and introduction

- Pastor <<*your name*>> asked me to call you and ask:

  - ☑ *How are you today — and how is your family doing?*
    (Wait for the answer, respond, and move to the next question.)

  - ☑ *Are you facing any specific challenges right now?*
    (Wait for the answer, make a note, and move to the next question.)

  - ☑ *Do you have enough groceries?*
    (Wait for the answer, make a note, and move to the next question.)

  - ☑ *Is there anything the church can do for you?*
    (Wait for the answer, make a note, and move to the next question.)

  - ☑ *How can I best pray for you today?*
    (Wait for the answer; respond with an encouraging prayer.)

    - Feel free to leave them with a positive Scripture.
    - Prayer is the **most important part** of your contact.

- Finally, here is **my personal phone number** and contact details if you need to call me.

4. **Follow Through**

Request your care leaders to report their contacts once a week to whomever you designate to accumulate the information.

➢ Use some electronic communication platform to submit the outcomes of each contact — nothing fancy.

➢ Include this information:

- Name of the household you contacted;
- When (day of the week/time of the day) you contacted the household; and,
- Results of the contact.

Friends, as we conclude our time together, to **download** a **reproducible version** of this presentation, go to **Covid19**.ag.org.

If you have **more questions**, go to **CMNI**.org, or
for **more leadership support**, go to **Covid19**.ag.org.

Finally, these are challenging times — unprecedented times. We have never been here, certainly not worldwide. Many people are fearful and almost everyone walks in uncertainty. **Fortunately**, even in uncharted waters, you can find your way home.

People — **all people** — are ready for good news, ready for hope. Could that be why the recently released song, *The Blessing*, topped *iTunes* charts **across ALL genres** . . . ?

During these difficult and disruptive times, let me encourage you to embrace and deploy the tools I shared with you. **Help your folks to find their way home**. You'll be glad you did. 😊

Thank you for joining me today!

God bless you . . . and let's **stay connected**!