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Crisis of Leadership

For use: January 3 - 9

Texts: Isaiah 6:1-4; Isaiah 6:5-7; Isaiah 6:8; Isaiah 6:9-13

It is said that anybody can be a leader when everything is running smoothly; it's crises, however, that separate true leaders from those who merely hold that title. We've seen several examples of both successful and failed leadership during the crises of the past few months.

In a recent podcast episode of LinkedIn Live, Steve Lucas, CEO at iCIMs (the talent recruiting company Internet Collaborative Information Management Systems) outlined three strategies to elevate your leadership in times of crisis.

The first strategy is practicing realism, empathy and optimism. Realism is essential because unrealistic optimism seems insensitive to people's true situations. Optimism that is realistic and empathetic exudes true leadership.

Next is quiet time. ICMs schedules 90 minutes each afternoon free of Zoom calls or other meetings for employees to spend with their families. Successful leaders today recognize that it's increasingly important to maintain work/life balance since work has now invaded our homes.

Finally, identify what really matters. True leaders look for what they have done in the past that needs to stop, what they haven't done before which they need to start doing, and what they currently do that they should continue.

Steve concludes from all of this, "It's time to step up. It's no accident that history's greatest leaders were forged in times of chaos, confusion and hardship. It's why every crisis is also an opportunity." [1]

A typical time of leadership crisis comes during a transfer of power. In those times, it can seem like there is a gap where no one is really in charge. That was especially true when Judah's king Uzziah died. Uzziah's leadership had eroded in his final years as he allowed his pride to lead him into false worship practices. Although Uzziah's heart eventually changed, the damage was already done—the nation had descended into a moral morass during Uzziah's period of failed leadership. Complicating the situation was the danger posed by Assyrian aggression on the horizon.

Judah's fate seemed sealed, until God stepped up to remind them who was really in charge. God took Isaiah, in vision, directly into the throne room in heaven. When Isaiah recognized his sinful condition, and the sinfulness of his nation in the presence of a holy God, it crushed his spirit. God, however, showed true, effective leadership by offering realistic and empathetic hope in the midst of Isaiah's despair.

Isaiah saw that Earth's troubles are put in perspective when viewed from heaven's vantage point. Assyrian armies don't seem so threatening when in God's presence, surrounded by angels shaking the foundations of the building with their songs of praise. And just as the angel cleansed Isaiah of his sin with coals from the altar, God purified the nation of Judah, and we too are in God's loving embrace even if we are in uncertain leadership times here on earth.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.business2community.com/podcasts/3-ways-to-step-up-as-a-leader-in-a-time-of-crisis-podcast-02372902>

For Reflection

Connecting: Have you ever received a message of hope or good news in the midst of a personal crisis? In those times, is it easy for you to fully accept the news and relax? Do you instead experience “cautious optimism” when that happens? Share your experiences with your group through your online connections.

Sharing: What do you think you'd do if you found yourself in Isaiah's place—standing in a throne room before a holy God?

1. I'd crumple into a blubbering heap
2. I'd join in the singing with the angels, praising God at the top of my voice
3. God would have a hard time getting a word in, because I have so many questions.
4. I'd be so nervous I'd embarrass myself with meaningless chatter
5. I'd be frozen in place, speechless
6. Other:

Applying: Can you kindly identify an area in your congregation or your community where there is a lack of effective leadership right now? Brainstorm ideas that you and your online small group can realistically do to either encourage those in leadership, or actually step up to provide the necessary leadership yourself.

Valuing: Are there people who look to you for leadership? Honestly assess

your leadership performance during the past few months. Where do you need God to help you step up your effectiveness? Share your thoughts with a trusted friend over the phone or a video chat and then pray for each other.

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