

Coronavirus: A Time to Hide or a Time to Inspire the World?

Three weeks ago, who'd have thought we'd be panicking over toilet paper and hunkering down in "self isolation" or quarantine?

But here we are—in the era of the coronavirus COVID-19, and a media frenzy that's plunged millions of people and tens of thousands of Christian organizations into sudden confusion and anxiety.

Of course, we're all concerned for the health and well-being of our loved ones—and it's absolutely critical to follow the advice of the experts to stay safe and well.

However, this is the paradox of the coronavirus crisis: This time of fear and isolation is also a time of unprecedented opportunity for soul-searching engagement and connection.

This is the moment when Christ-followers can use the power of communication and the media to show a panic-stricken world that, while fear and uncertainty rages all around them, there is one who gives real hope and peace.

Regrettably, instead of courageously leading the charge—like Gandalf in *The Lord of the Rings*—many Christian organizations are scurrying in the opposite direction and missing a fabulous opportunity to let their light shine. They've no cohesive message to engage or inform their members, donors and stakeholders... and no communications strategy in place.

They've gone into hibernation—and left their members and donors out in the cold.

To use a biblical analogy, it's as if much of the Christian

world is imitating Gideon: the Old Testament would-be warrior who hid in the winepress when he should have been standing up to his own “coronavirus,” the Midianite invaders (see Judges 6).

Christian leaders: This isn’t a time to shrink back and hide. This is your moment to engage and inspire the world!

After decades helping Christian organizations navigate crisis situations, I’ve pretty much encountered it all: financial controversies, allegations of abuse, kidnappings and—yes—even deadly virus outbreaks, such as the Ebola crisis in West Africa.

I’ve come alongside organizations—big and small—that were initially “hiding in the winepress” from the invading hordes of reporters, but summoned the strength to engage the Media-ites head-on.

Believe me, this took courage. But their willingness to communicate proactively, to engage a skeptical media and speak out in the eye of the storm earned them respect—and, in some cases, even saved the reputation of their organization.

I’m sure you’re thinking, *But Christian organizations don’t need to protect their reputation from the coronavirus, do they?*

Yes, I believe they do! What will the watching world think of us if we go silent, go into hiding and shiver in our boots like those who have no hope?

Isn’t this the chance you’ve been waiting for? The opportunity to share your story—and the Good News—with a thirsty world that’s panting for a gulp of genuine hope?

Now, more than ever, every faith-based organization—from global missions agencies to local Christian schools and churches—needs to communicate effectively and creatively in a

crisis, across all media channels, including the rapid-paced potential minefield of digital and social media.

Happily, Gideon's story doesn't end with him cowering in the winepress. He becomes a mighty man of valor, vanquishes his foes and glorifies God.

Like Gideon in the midst of a fearful crisis, it's time for the church to break out of hiding. It's time for us to take godly leadership and action in a world that's scared out of its wits right now, desperate for a voice of calm and reassurance.

You can be that voice. You can be that Gideon. It's time for you to engage and inspire the world. {eoa}

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