

EFS SERVANT LEADERSHIP NEWSLETTER

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TOPIC THIS ISSUE:
Leading in Crisis:
Wisdom from
John Maxwell



“The true test of leadership is how you will function in a crisis.” Brian Tracy

A Decision that is a Turning Point

By Michael J. Stabile



This edition of the Servant Leadership Focus Newsletter was written with this in mind: to **encourage your heart, empower your thinking, and equip you as a leader.** I have had the great privilege of having John C. Maxwell as one of my mentors over the years. No, I

have not ever met him personally, but I have been influenced by his books and speaking for over twenty-five years. He is a leader who models the way, especially during this COVID-19 crisis. His heart, courage, teaching, and leadership have impressed me during this unprecedented time in the history of the world.

John shares when it comes to a crisis...

**The dictionary defines crisis as “an intense time of great difficulty.”*

**The medical term crisis means “a turning point.”*

**In Greek, crisis means decision.*

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And John Maxwell’s definition combines all three: ***“A time of intense difficulty, requiring a decision, that is a turning point.”***

With all the uncertainty in the world, it is evident that we need leaders who will fight for the highest good of those they lead whether in our homes, at work, or in our communities. We are living in a time of intense difficulty, which requires a decision or a series of decisions that are turning points.

Accidental living is living by chance, unintentionally. It is hoping for things just to work out or get better but not doing anything to make it occur. It is living by default and not by design. Accidental leadership is similar. We just hope our children do what they are supposed to do. We just hope people just do their job, because that is why we hired them, right?

Crisis leadership is just simply intentional living and leading by our willingness to make a decision each and every day to look in the mirror and say what am I doing today to get at least 1 percent better today? What am I doing today to focus on what is in my control and I can take action on? What decision must I make today that will take me out of my comfort zone?

The decisions we make today are like seeds. Once they are planted and nurtured they have the opportunity to grow and mature. Leading intentionally means I must face the brutal realities about myself, the COVID-19 crisis, the world, and recognize I need to make a decision. Do I want to remain in the default mode or am I ready to embrace the difficulty, trials, and testing that it brings? Do I want to live in a hopeful reality? Do I want to decide to live with a growth, positive, above the line mindset? Do I decide today, to embrace the challenge that COVID-19 has provided and see the opportunities that lay before us?

I hope that the following articles will encourage, empower, and equip you to make a decision that will be a turning point for you and all that you influence and lead.

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Making the Difficult–But RIGHT–Decision

By John Maxwell | March 10, 2020



The past few days have been busy. I'm in Israel on a trip with several people, and while we've enjoyed our time touring this great country, we've been impacted like the rest of the world by the Covid-19 virus. Everywhere you go, it's the subject of conversations and concerns; it is quite literally the focus of the world right now.

It's challenging as a leader when something like this happens because there are so many ways it impacts how you lead. There are financial decisions because of the way concerns are impacting the markets. There are logistical decisions because of the changing health and travel advisories. (Trust me on that—getting home from Israel is suddenly a different proposition!)

But more than anything else, there are difficult decisions to be made right now, decisions that will impact more than bottom lines or travel plans. As leaders, some of the decisions we are facing right now have the capacity to impact the lives and health of countless people. These aren't decisions to be made lightly.

In fact, our team just made one such decision. After speaking with several global leaders and monitoring the impact of the virus physically and mentally on people world-wide, our team just yesterday made the difficult decision to reschedule our Spring International Maxwell Certification event. This is one of our annual coaching certification events attended by thousands of men and women who want to become John Maxwell Team coaches.

This decision will have significant impact on finances, schedules, and plans, but is the RIGHT thing to do. Over the past several days, our CEO Mark Cole has met with me and briefed me on what he was learning, and we were in constant conversation about what we needed to do. In every discussion, Mark kept bringing us back to the question, "What's best for our people?"

Sometimes in leadership you have to make decisions that are challenging and difficult. But in all those decisions, leaders need to think, as Mark did, "What's best for our people?" Simon Sinek, in his book *The Infinite Game*, talks about the need for leaders to put people ahead of profits; to care more about the long view than the short term.



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Over the past several days, I've watched and offered counsel as Mark has worked his way to this massive decision, and here's what I've observed and want to pass on to you should you find yourself in his shoes soon:

1. We've been in Israel for the past few weeks for a series of trips, and despite our busy schedule and the seven-hour time difference. Mark has intentionally carved out time to talk with our leadership team about the virus and its impact.

2. In times of crisis, many leaders want to shrink the circle of information and responsibility, but it was expanding his circle that was essential for Mark in keeping the big picture in mind. By empowering members of our leadership team to monitor the news, watch market trends, and seek advice from other business leaders, he was able to have accurate, up-to-the-minute information synthesized and presented to him daily, which allowed him to see the Big Picture with clear eyes.

3. Mark sought out several of his mentors, many of whom lead businesses that are being impacted by Covid-19. He listened to their challenges and thought processes, and he learned from them. I sat down with him each night as a sounding board and gave him space to process everything he was learning. He didn't rush to a decision simply because there was stress—he lived with the tension until he could get enough information and perspective to make the right decision.

4. I mentioned this earlier, but it bears repeating that when it comes to making difficult decisions, the impact on people must be top of mind for any leader. Not just your shareholders or employees, but the people you may never see—the spouses, children, and communities that will be affected based on your choice. Every choice you make as a leader has an effect that radiates outward; that effect can be as gentle as a ripple, or as devastating as a bomb blast, depending on how much consideration you've given to the people it will touch.

Our company has people as its highest value—we are people of value who value people and add value to them. We have already worked with everyone who was scheduled for our March event and provided them a solution for the disruption. We're adding value in new and creative ways thanks to technology and the efforts of our incredible team. It's not what we'd planned, and it's not easy, but it's what is RIGHT.

Leader, whatever challenges come your way over the next few weeks, keep people at the center of your thinking. In times of uncertainty, when you're not sure what to do, if you'll make any difficult decision with people in mind, you'll find you come out better in the end.

How to Be Confident in a Crisis

By John C. Maxwell

*This article originally appeared in the March 2017 issue of SUCCESS magazine. It is not only timely, but also right on target for our current COVID-19 Crisis.

“He who smiles in a crisis has found someone to blame.”



I laughed when I came across this quote because, like anything that humors us, this saying has an element of truth to it. Sometimes the only person thinking positively about a crisis is doing so because he has figured out why it's not his own fault.

But there are many reasons to think positively in times of crisis. For one thing, within every problem we can find the seeds of opportunity. They might seem small, especially when compared with the enormity of the crisis. But opportunity exists nonetheless.

Furthermore I believe great leaders can handle any crisis with confidence and grace. We might not feel like smiling, but we move forward with the knowledge that a solution is available and attainable. The key to managing crises with confidence is to be thoroughly prepared in order to make informed decisions.

If you are a leader, you know a crisis is never far away. Use the following tips to face an upcoming crisis with the maximum amount of confidence.



4 Keys to Building Your Confidence

1. Prepare for every possibility.

Legendary University of California-Los Angeles basketball coach John Wooden said his favorite part of being a coach was the practices. When practice is perfected, the late coach said, the game becomes automatic. Conversely, when it's game time and you slacked off in practice, it's too late to prepare. If you wait to prepare until you're confronted with a crisis, you're too late.

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Prepare by listing a variety of possible scenarios and determine your response to each one. Also spend time learning from experts in your industry. Ask them questions about their past crises. Chances are they have encountered the same challenges you are likely to face and can offer sound advice and strategies.

No one can prepare for every contingency, but you can prepare for the known possibilities. Think ahead, be prepared and practice your plan whenever possible. Then, when the crisis comes, your response will be automatic. The more familiar the scenario, the more confident your reaction will be.

2. Define reality.

Iconic management expert Peter Drucker once wrote, "*A time of turbulence is a dangerous time, but its greatest danger is a temptation to deny reality.*" Instead of denying reality during a crisis, an effective leader defines it. This means seeing the situation realistically.

When a crisis arrives, spend some time alone describing the problem. What is it? What caused it? How can you address it?

Ask your team for their assessment. Break it down into measurable parts by separating the solvable from the unsolvable. This is very important. You have to acknowledge what's in your control to fix and focus on that. Finally, establish a game plan for solving the solvable and commit to it. A defined, measurable plan allows you to proceed with confidence.



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3. Communicate often.

This goes back to defining reality. You need to do this for those you lead as much as for yourself. In the face of a crisis, it's tempting to put your head down and focus only on the problem. But that behavior won't inspire confidence in others. Be open and describe the problem to your team. Getting things out in the open will clear the air and let them know you are with them. Communicate the game plan for solving it. As you continue to deal with the crisis, repeat this communication process.

My friend Andy Stanley, a great pastor in Georgia, says, "*Vision leaks.*" In other words, leaders can't expect to share a vision—or a solution to a problem—just one time. Team members need to hear it often to truly embrace and trust it. Your consistent communication will build the team's confidence in your leadership and in its own ability to overcome the crisis.

4. Learn to grow.

The California pastor Rick Warren says, "*The moment you stop learning, you stop leading.*" You've probably heard the saying that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over, expecting different results. Stop the vicious circle. Instead try to learn why your method didn't work so you can do something different next time. Intentionally reflect on the experience because experience alone is not the best teacher, *evaluated* experience is. Dig deeply into the tough times for all they can teach you.

The difference between average people and achievers is their perception of and response to failure. The same could be said of crises. Once the crisis has passed, reflect on your leadership during that time.

What did you learn, and where can you improve in leadership, communication, problem-solving and team-building? Debrief your team to discover where they think you can improve and what they learned from the experience.

Crises are stressful and stretch us in ways we don't enjoy. But the reality is that difficult times and tough decisions come with the territory in leadership. But if you prepare beforehand and effectively problem-solve during, you'll have the necessary tools to get through any crisis with confidence.

