

# Insights from Movements for Effective Crisis Response

*When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings. (1 Corinthians 9:22–23 NLT)*

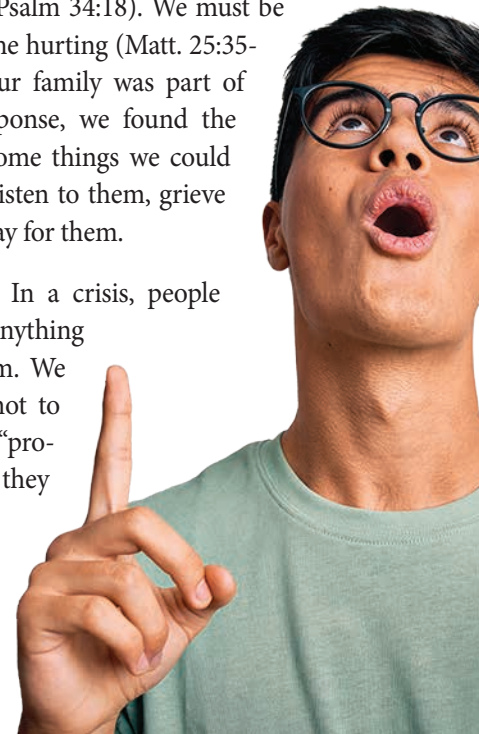
By **DR. STAN PARKS**

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Trials and tribulations, including natural and man-made disasters, are part of our earthly reality. Our world has been broken by sin, and as a result, nature has been distorted. Our response to crises needs to combine compassion for hurting people with an awareness that those without Christ desperately need the Gospel.

The following are some insights I have gained from many movement disciples in their crisis responses—ranging from the 2004 Aceh tsunami to the recent COVID-19 pandemic.

1. **Embrace a Kingdom Perspective.** Understand that the kingdom of God can expand during a crisis. Uncertainty and turmoil often create a willingness for people to consider the Gospel. Approach disaster response with faith and hope, seeking God's guidance and trusting in His provision (James 1:12).
2. **Be Prepared.** The question is not *if* but *when* crises will happen. Disciples in a movement have the right DNA of loving God and loving their neighbor. In a crisis, they rise to the occasion. But we can do a better job of preparing to be like the five wisely prepared virgins of Matthew 25. This includes equipping more disciples with practical training, such as how to “shelter in place” and provide basic first aid.
3. **Be Strategic.** We need to integrate crisis response with discipleship. Maximizing strategy and coordination between first, second, and long-term responders can make the most of relationships and opportunities at each stage. Crisis response must become a long-term opportunity to plant and multiply congregations.
4. **Prioritize Prayer.** Recognize that God is the ultimate healer and provider. Organize concerted efforts of prayer within the community and from the global Church. Ask God to be the designer and leader in the response efforts.
5. **Fight the Real Battle.** Ultimately, crises are a symptom of a broken world. The crises of wars, disasters, and pandemics only intensify the difficulties and tragedies of life. Amid the stress and trauma faced by responders, they need to remember their true enemies are the spiritual powers of darkness (Eph. 6:12) and use the weapons God has put at their disposal for pulling down strongholds of resistance to the Gospel (2 Cor. 10:3-5).
6. **Demonstrate Compassion and Love.** God is close to the brokenhearted (Psalm 34:18). We must be God's sheep that help the hurting (Matt. 25:35-36). Many times, as our family was part of the Aceh tsunami response, we found the most helpful and welcome things we could do for people were to listen to them, grieve alongside them, and pray for them.
7. **Be Wise and Patient.** In a crisis, people will often say and do anything they feel will help them. We must be very careful not to manipulate them into “professing faith” because they




think we will give them more help. Often, the seeds we sow in the immediate aftermath of the disaster will not be harvested until months later, when survivors can begin to respond with a clearer mind and without any feeling of coercion.

8. **Be Committed for the Long Term.** Most crisis responses are highly concentrated in the first few months, and then outsider helpers return to their lives or move on to the next crisis. While you might personally be involved only for a period, it is important to be part of a larger network that has a long-term plan. If your network continues to help when others leave, you will have far greater influence moving forward.
9. **Partner with the Local Body of Christ.** The greatest resource in these crises is the local and/or nearby body of believers. Many times, they are already responding, so we need to ask, “How can we empower, equip, and resource them, as they are the long-term hands and feet of Christ in their locality?”
10. **Partner with the Global Body of Christ.** We need to collaborate well, to identify and communicate with first, second, and long-term responders—both locally and globally. (Some are doing this, such as IDRN<sup>1</sup> and RUN.<sup>2</sup>) We also need to work on preparing and caching supplies ahead of time.
11. **Partner with Other Responders.**
  - Collaborate with existing Christian networks and organizations who may have a different plan.
  - Collaborate with secular networks and organizations when possible.<sup>3</sup>
12. **Conserve Your Resources.** Many organizations will spend a lot of money early in the crisis. You can help direct those funds and make use of their other resources—such as information,

transportation, and supplies. By “surfing” on these resources, you can preserve your funds and resources to use for long-term impact when most others have moved on.

13. **Maintain Integrity and Accountability.** Act with integrity and maintain financial transparency. Ensure that resources are being used wisely, honoring both the givers and the recipients.
14. **Be Impartial.** This can be controversial. Some Christians feel we should prioritize helping Christians. I would agree this is the case when their Christian identity is being used against them—such as in persecution or when a government blocks aid to Christian families and communities. However, except for anti-Christian situations, it is important to give aid with no distinction for a person’s faith.
15. **Serve the Responders.** Often those responding do not realize the toll that they are paying. They are driven to respond to the great need around them and often internalize the trauma. Since they are helping those with greater need, they may feel they cannot take time or attention for themselves. As a larger team, we have to be aware of the cost and impact on responders and help them receive the care and support they need, lest they become casualties themselves.
16. **Prioritize Sustainability.** Focus on long-term solutions that empower local communities to recover and thrive. Invest in discipleship training and leadership development that builds resilience and fosters spiritual growth.
17. **Celebrate God’s Sovereignty.** Recognize and proclaim the goodness and sovereignty of God even in the midst of chaos. Allow the response to disaster to be a testimony to God’s grace, mercy, and love.

In embracing these principles, we must remember the words of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:28: *And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.* That purpose is to conform both responders and survivors into the image of Jesus (Rom. 8:29). 

1 International Disaster Response Network, idrn.info.

2 Reaching Unreached Nations, www.runministries.org.

3 This would include the United Nations and national governments, when possible.