

Lean into Chaos—It's Often Where God Is Greatly at Work

By **C. ANDERSON**

C. Anderson is an experienced field practitioner and leader. The past 27 years, she served in Asia with YWAM Frontier Missions. Anderson trains and coaches both international and indigenous church planters toward the launching of Disciple Making Movements. She blogs weekly about DMM related issues at dmmsfrontiermissions.com. Other articles on member care, language learning, visa stress, etc. are available at missionarylife.org. Her 30-day devotional for church-planters, *Faith to Move Mountains*, can be purchased on amazon.com.

We opened our email and read the notice. The American Consulate in India was advising all American citizens to leave the country. Threat levels were high, as the conflict between India and Pakistan escalated. In 1998, these two nations had both become nuclear powers. In 2017 and 2018, threats and border skirmishes increased between the two nations. The email came. American citizens were being advised to leave the nation. Our government could no longer be responsible for our safety.

Reading the notice, my husband and I quietly discussed it. We had three small children to consider. What about them? Tucking our sweet five-year-old, blond-headed boy into bed, I smoothed his hair back as he drifted off to sleep. Was it fair to put his little life at risk? How serious was the danger?

Ministry in the area was growing. We felt bonded with our Indian friends and colleagues. They didn't have the option of leaving. Was it right for us to do so?

We consulted with our mission. They gave us the freedom to make our own choice about what to do; we were to follow God's leading and our conscience. Being an agency that had a good number of national



staff, it was handled differently than for fully foreign organizations. Talking to missionary friends, several reported they'd been told by their organizations to leave as soon as possible.

Going to God in prayer, peace filled our hearts. We were to stay. Within six months, the evacuation order was lifted and a cease-fire agreement between the two nations was signed. We breathed a sigh of relief, grateful that we had chosen to stay. Our doing so had bonded us in unique ways to those we had come to reach.

Fight or Flight

Fight or flight are two common physical and mental responses to stress. Fight. We face the threat head-on, ready to engage in battle. Flight. We run from the threat, escaping it and finding a place of safety.

Our world is a place of increasing turmoil. A war between Russia and Ukraine causes concern about nuclear threats around the world. While the COVID-19 pandemic is no longer as deadly as it was, it is far from gone. Floods, hurricanes, and other natural disasters bring loss of life and property, making headline news.

How should a disciple-maker and Jesus follower respond? Is it fight or flight? Perhaps neither. God

is often amazingly at work in chaos and turmoil. God leans into chaos and so must we.

5 Ways to Lean into Crisis

Consider the following five choices in the midst of chaos and crisis. The decisions we make in troubled times can lead to significant kingdom advance. It can cause the multiplication of disciples and the launch of new movements.



1 Choose to stay —those who stay present in crisis often see the greatest impact.

Don't read me wrong. I'm not saying you always have to stay when there is a serious threat to life and limb. It's a decision every person and family must prayerfully make before the Lord. We see biblical examples of both staying (Acts 4:21-31) and leaving (2 Cor. 11:32-33). Our default, however, should not be to leave. Instead, we must train ourselves to lean in. We need to recognize the opportunities crisis provides for the light of the Gospel to shine brightly.

There is a cost involved in staying, in leaning in. I cannot minimize that. Trauma and a significant drain on mental and physical health are realities in a crisis. However, the glory of God shines brightly in these times, and many are drawn to Jesus as we offer that gift: the gift of presence to those we serve. *And so we lean in.*



2 Choose to advance —moving toward crisis rather than away from it.

The tsunami that struck Indonesia in 2004 is forever etched in my mind. As it struck so suddenly, many dear friends and colleagues fled to the top of a mountain, barely escaping with their lives. Over 200,000 people died that day. Following the tragedy, our colleagues worked with government and army staff to bag bodies for days on end. It was not easy. Not easy at all. In that time though, unprecedented doors flung open for the Gospel to spread.

I remembered this on a call with a mentor a few months back. "Do you know any DMM-minded people going into Ukraine?" he asked. What about YWAM? Who is there and how can we train them to start DMMs there? He recognized the opportunity within the crisis. My mentor wanted to spur me, and anyone else he could find, into responding.

A few hours later, we together made a call to someone I'm training in the United Kingdom. "Ian," he asked, "What are you doing about Ukraine?"

Will we lean into these kinds of opportunities to minister the two hands of the Gospel? Not only to bring relief but to share the message of Christ? If we don't, we may miss the chance to partner with God in what He is doing. *And so we lean in.*

3 Choose to believe God is working in the midst of tragedy.

Most of us can quote Romans 8:28. We've preached sermons on it. When lives are at risk, bridges are burning, or hospitals overflow with sick and dying, we are put to the test. Do we believe that *all things work together for good*? Faith is a gift from God. It is also a choice we make. In the midst of crisis, we choose to believe that God is sovereignly in control. We place our hope in a God who is able to bring about incredible good out of horrible events. It's what He does. One of the good things He so often does is to draw people to Himself in these times. Hearts are soft and open. *And so we lean in.*



4 Choose to let go of old norms and wineskins.

Crisis times have a way of destroying the old and making way for the new. During the COVID-19 pandemic, church buildings across the globe had to close. We were forced to meet at home or online if we were to meet at all. It was an unwanted change of the primary wineskin we used to gather as a body. Today, we are mostly past that. What have we learned? How have we grown? Are any of those new wineskins to remain? So many have quickly reverted to the old, preferring to go backward instead of forward.

Part of leaning in is letting go. It's listening and discerning what God might be releasing in the midst of the difficulty. *And so we lean in.*



5 Choose to receive the hidden kingdom blessing in times of crisis.

It may be hidden, but it is there. Receive it. Lean into God with open hands and open heart, ready to accept God's somewhat mysterious gifts: the kind He gives in the darkest of times. Jesus compared the kingdom of God to a pearl of great price. Those priceless treasures are often given in times of difficulty and pain. Deep friendships, the revelation of new experientially understood truth from His Word, unusual miracles and supernatural encounters...these are a few of the hidden treasures that can be found. And with it, the joy of seeing many lost people swept into His kingdom. *And so we lean in.*

The 17th century in England was a time of great social upheaval, civil war, and political crisis. In this environment, revivalists George Whitefield and Charles Wesley emerged. Revival swept the nation. Between 1738 and 1791, 1.35 million people put their faith in Christ.¹ These men leaned into crisis and partnered with what God was doing.

May we be courageous enough to do the same. Our willingness to lean in may result in hundreds, if not thousands, of new movements being catalyzed across the globe. MF

¹ romans1015.com/british-great-awakening