



Church Disrupted: How do we respond *spiritually* in troubled times?

I see the emails, the ones filled with advice about what church leaders should be doing in these days of pandemic and racial unrest. Many people have an opinion, a perspective to share with beleaguered pastors who have been thrown into unprecedented circumstances.

The webinars and resources advertised in these emails are responses to legitimate questions facing the church. Many offer great suggestions: how to keep congregants engaged while limited to an online experience, how to financially survive in a struggling economy, or how to respond compassionately to the needs in one's community. All are valid conversations. **However, what seems to be missing in most of these solution-based resources is a *spiritual* core—a call to connect with God to discover what he is wanting for his church.**

One of my favorite definitions for “**spiritual**” comes from secular psychologist Lisa Miller. In her book *The Spiritual Child* she defines spirituality as “a sense of a close personal relationship to God...and a vital source of daily guidance.” She differentiates between adhering to religious principles alone and spirituality. Spirituality is a felt relational connection—a two-way dialogue enjoyed by the created with the transcendent Creator, that brings a sense of love and direction to one's life.

For Christians, spirituality is the privilege of our reconciliation, our birthright as adopted children of God. We are no longer alone in the world. Because of Jesus, we have an ongoing connection with the Holy Spirit, the opportunity to abide in God's constant presence—to seek God in every circumstance we face because he is actively working and desires to give us guidance. **Spirituality is the lived experience of our relationship with God.**

So how can Christian leaders be “spiritual” while responding to our current disruption? **We need to realize that it is not enough to acknowledge that God is *with us*. We need to be *with him* as well.**

St. Augustine wrote in his *Confessions*,

“Late have I loved you, beauty so old and so new: late have I loved you. And see, you were within and I was in the external world and sought you there, and in my unlovely state I plunged into those lovely created things which you made. You were with me, and I was not with you.”

There is a reason why Augustine's book is titled *Confessions*. It takes courage, humility, and honest introspection to admit that we may be going through our lives less connected with God than we



could be. Very few Christian leaders set out to ignore God in the execution of their vocation. We believe that God is with us and we want to honor him, but the pressure and the pace of our responsibilities can distract us from being present with him. Like Skye Jethani explains in his book simply titled *With*, we can fall into patterns of doing our work **for** God, **under** God or expecting something **from** God without actually being **with** God in our work process.

To help keep us connected we need **intentional practices** that cause us to regularly pause, be *with* God and seek his guidance. What might that look like for you and your leadership team? Let me give you three ideas to talk over with God.

1. **Consider beginning your day with Proverbs 3:5–8.** Renew your mind with the truth that God doesn't expect you to figure **anything** out on your own. He wants to be sought. He is present to guide. In fact, this passage reminds you: turning from the evil of being impressed by your own wisdom is physically good for you.
2. **Consider setting up a 15–30 minute pause in the middle of the day to check-in with God.** Bring ideas, issues or problems to God. Talk with him about his opinion. Replay your conversations with others, with God. Listen for God's perspective on what was said, what you felt and how you responded.
3. **Consider a nightly review of your day with God.** Reflect on when you were in tune and aware of God through the day. Notice how that affected your experience. Ask God to help you see times when he was there to help but you were distracted from him. Notice how that affected your experience. End your time by remembering that God was loving you whether you were with him or not.

Whatever you decide to do, I hope you feel connected with God in your decision. May you experience the fullness of your spiritual blessing and inheritance (Ephesians 1:15-23).



Debbie Swindoll is the Executive Director of Grafted Life Ministries. Grafted Life resources churches with tools pastors and leaders can use to discover and discern what God wants them to do. [Disrupted: A Time to Pause and Partner with God](#) is their most recent resource for leadership teams responsible for responding to the COVID-19 pandemic.