

**HOW TO:**  
**KEEP YOUR**  
**JOB**  
*(AND HELP YOUR PASTOR)*  
**DURING**  
**COVID-19**

**10 WAYS FOR STAFF PASTORS  
TO SUPPORT THEIR CHURCH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

**BY RYAN LATHAM**

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# Intro -

We are living in unprecedented times. Currently, we do not know when COVID-19 will cease to be a threat in our world. We do not know when Shelter in Place will end. We do not know when we will be able to gather in the same building again, and how long it will take before people feel comfortable meeting in large groups. Unemployment is quickly growing. The thought of job security is on everyone's minds.

It is important that everyone plays a small part in protecting their own jobs and the jobs of their co-workers. My prayer and focus is to help minimize the financial effects on churches and the impact on job loss.

If we all make small sacrifices and intentionally offer to help, we will come out on the other side of COVID-19 stronger. There are no guarantees that we won't experience hard times and maybe even the loss of a job, but God has promised to be with us through it all.

Let me encourage you with these words: You were created for such a time as this. God has placed you in this position, at this time, for a reason. You are the right leader for this season in history!

I am for you and in your corner!

Ryan Latham

# BACK STORY

The market crash of 2008 is forever etched into the fabric of my mind. During that time we were forced to short sell our home, and eventually the church we were serving at let us go due to budget issues. That is why this current season is so near to my heart.

Here are three things we learned from that time that I hope can serve as an encouragement to you.

## **1) God Always Provides**

To say we were devastated to have to short sell our home would be an understatement. But the Lord answered our prayers! He provided us not only with a church parsonage but a church vehicle as well.

## **2) God Has a Plan**

After being let go I was humbled, angry, confused, excited, scared and so much more. It was amazing to see how the Lord divinely connected us to a church that had been praying for a program like ours for over 3 years. It was a match that only God could orchestrate, and it never would have happened if I hadn't been let go.

## **3) You Can Still Be Friends**

The pastors who let me go are still great friends to this day. Was it hard, yes. Was it awkward, yes. But was it still having a friendship worth it? YES! I had to continually remind myself that they didn't want to let me go, but it was what they had to do. I had to keep that perspective.

# **SECTION 1**

## **10 WAYS FOR STAFF PASTORS TO SUPPORT THEIR CHURCH IN UNCERTAIN TIMES**

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# 1.

## SUPPORT FINANCIALLY

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**F**inancial uncertainty is a reality in our nation right now. It is unknown how all of this will affect the financial state of the church. 20%, 40%, more? and for how long? For staff members, this must be a reality for us and not just our Lead Pastor, the CFO and the board.

Here are two ways that you can show support in the area of finances.

### **1. Offer to Take a Temporary Salary Reduction for the Next Few Months.**

**WHAT?!** Yes, *offer* to take a voluntary pay reduction. This sounds crazy. But if everyone reduce by a small amount, it can make a BIG difference. If 5 people take 20% off their salary, that can save one person's whole salary.

### **2. Offer to Increase Your Giving By X% for the Next Few Months.**

*The job you save might be your own.*

# 2.

## NEW JOB DESCRIPTIONS

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**A**nd *other duties assigned as needed*. In most job descriptions there is a closing line that reads, “*and other duties assigned as needed*.” Well, if that wasn’t more applicable today than ever before! As you have probably noticed, your job description doesn’t make a lot of sense right now. So, in the words of Opra, “*You get a new job description! You get a new job description! You ALL get a new job description!*”

***Right now, EVERYONE has a new job description! The new job description is whatever it takes.***

Having a “whatever it takes” mentality means that

- ◆ If I am the Small Groups Pastor but there is a camera that needs to be run, well...assigned as needed.
- ◆ If I am the Youth Pastor and there needs to be a mailbox installed in the parking lot...assigned as needed.
- ◆ If I am the CFO and there are Easter baskets that need to be passed out...assigned as needed.

A “whatever it takes” mentality is about showing initiative and a willingness to help, even outside our department. It is about seeing that we are all on one team, with one score. It is about taking the initiative and *offering* our assistance.

# 3.

## INNOVATION WINS

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**N**o one has ever led in a situation like this. So we are ALL learning at the same time. This is not the time to do what you have always done. **THROW OUT THE MANUAL** and **INNOVATE**. It's like the scene in the movie *Apollo 13* when the astronauts are running out of oxygen and have to figure out how to put a square peg in a round hole. There is no manual for this, so we must innovate.

Here are three ways to become innovative.

### 1. Learn a New Skill

Take an online class, webinar, read different books, study a new field.

### 2. Network

Join Facebook groups and search for leadership consultants who are offering help. Connect to other pastors and exports in this new, online world.

### 3. Pray

Pray for the Lord to give you new insights into how you can serve your community. Pray that we would be like the sons of Issachar. That we would ***understand the times*** and ***know what our community needs***. (1 Chronicles 12:32)

# 4.

## TEMPORARY RALLY CRY

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**F**reedom! The immortal declaration of William Wallace in *Braveheart* isn't exactly what we are looking for, but we do need a temporary rally cry. As Pastors and staff are moving at a fast pace and more trust is being given with work times and space, it is important that upper leaders know what you are going after and that it's in alignment with the church's rally cry.

As you lead your own team of staff and volunteers, they need to hear now more than ever "faith over fear" and "peace in the storm." Those are foundations of truth. They need to hear something other than "more Facebook live and more Zoom." As Saturday Night Live showed us, we need more than just "more cow bell."

Your team needs a temporary rally cry, a vision that can unite their efforts and energy. Pastors need to know what their teams are going after, so they can feel confident that they are making a unified effort to reach the church.

It's ok to have a temporary rally cry. This is not who we are permanently, but this is who we are currently.

# 5.

## BE F.A.T.

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**M**issions trip time! For years I have told my teams that when we go on a missions trip things will constantly change. We start with a plan, but we need to expect that plan to change. Right now, your leaders need that type of mentality. We are ready for things to change and we will be ready.

Here is how you can be F.A.T. (it's not because you are working next to your kitchen these days.)

**F**lexible  
Things are changing so fast and everything is in real time. Most Pastors are used to having information ahead of time and being able to make a plan. But right now, everyone is on a level playing ground. We are all getting information at the same time and that information changes by the hour.

Frustration comes from unmet expectations. If I set my expectation to know that things will change, and I will most likely be asked to do things I am not used to doing or even comfortable with, then it will be easier for me to not become frustrated.

## **A** vailable

Not only do you need to be available but you need to make yourself available. What do I mean by that? Often times we say, "If you need anything, let me know." But people won't know that you have a secret ninja skill to run sound or that you know the CEO of the hospital unless you tell them. Offer specific suggestions on how you can help. "If you need me to run to the church and help film, I am available."

## **T** eachable

You might need to learn from the 15-year-old computer kid who knows how to run your live stream. You might need to quickly go and learn how to run a camera. Be ready to learn something new.

Three questions to ask yourself to help become F.A.T.

### **Flexible -**

- 1) How can I stretch in this season?
- 2) What is the Lord trying to teach me?
- 3) Are my expectations correct/reasonable?

### **Available -**

- 1) What skills/talents do I have that I can offer?
- 2) Who can I inform about those talents and skills?
- 3) Who on our team can I help in this season?

### **Teachable -**

- 1) What skills can I learn to help my team?
- 2) How can I learn that skill?
- 3) What skill can I learn to prepare me for the next season?

# 6.

## LOOK FOR LEADS NOT LAGS

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**B**e ahead of the curve as much as you can. Start to look at what might be next and begin to strategize for that.

The other day I needed to get out of the house, so I drove to Chik-fil-A for lunch. There were about 75 cars driving very efficiently through the drive-through. This is something they were well prepared for because they have been reinventing the drive-through experience for years. Chick-fil-A didn't know it was for this season, but they are prepared because they looked ahead.

Identifying **lead indicators** helps you influence change, while identifying **lag indicators** merely presents a record of what happened.

Here are three questions to ask yourself.

1. What are the lead indicators I am seeing?
2. What can we do now to prepare us for what is coming?
3. How can we influence the change that we see coming?

# 7.

## CELEBRATE THE WINS

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Everyone loves to win. They also love to know that they won. In this time of confusion it is easy to miss the wins because we don't know what we are looking for. As a ministry leader it is important that we are defining the wins and celebrating those wins.

### 1. Defining the Wins

We start by working with our Pastor or supervisor to define the wins that they want to go after in this season. Now is the time for you to take the initiative to offer suggestions of what the wins could be. Don't sit back and wait for those to be defined for you.

### 2. Celebrating the Wins

Now that those wins have been defined, make sure to celebrate them publicly with your teams and report them back to your supervisors. Communicating the wins will energize those in your ministry and encourage your supervisors.

# 8.

## BE A PROBLEM SOLVER

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**L**eaders solve problems, followers find problems. The bigger the problems you can solve, the more you can achieve and the more respect you will earn. Problem solvers lift burdens and breathe life into the organization.

Here are three ways to become a great problem solver.

### 1. Stay Open-Minded

Great problem solvers approach every issue as if it is a new one. It is easy to get trapped in old ways of doing things and ways that have worked in the past, thus limiting our ability to have fresh perspective.

### 2. Stay Humble

Problem solvers are more focused on finding solutions than who gets credit. Invite others into the process of thinking through solutions. The right person to help might not have the right title, but they can still contribute valuably.

### 3. Start With the End in Mind

Ask yourself what the end result looks like and then work backwards. Great problem solvers are good at casting vision and articulating the steps to get there.

# 9.

## BE AN ENCOURAGER

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**P**aul needed Barnabas and your Pastor needs you. The name Barnabas means the son of encouragement or the son of comfort. That is exactly what your Pastor and those on your team need.

Here are four ways to bring encouragement.

### 1. Stay Optimistic

Look at the things you have, not the things you don't have.

### 2. Say "Thank you" Often

Look for unique ways to say thank you. Maybe write a letter, send a video, or have your family draw pictures that you mail out.

### 3. Extend Grace

In this season, people are in need of extra grace as they navigate working from home, home schooling, financial uncertainty, and a host of other issues.

### 4. Pray with People

Ask people how you can pray for them and even pray with them on your Zoom call, or write out your prayer in a text.

# 10.

## OVER COMMUNICATE

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**C**ommunicate, communicate, communicate. Good communicators communicate the same information in different forms. They utilize text, email, GroupMe, social media, pigeon carries (*ok, maybe not today*). Good communicators understand that not everyone is on social media all day. If you post something one time, it doesn't mean everyone saw it.

### **Three Things to Communicate**

- 1) What is the plan?
- 2) How will we execute the plan?
- 3) How will we communicate the plan?

### **Three Directions to Communicate**

- 1) Up.** Take the initiative to communicate to whom you report. Perhaps you turn in a weekly report with wins, losses, and learns. This is not the time to assume your supervisors know what you are doing.
- 2) Side.** Communicate to the team that you lead.
- 3) Down.** Communicate to the people you serve.

## SECTION 2

# IT HAPPENED! NOW WHAT?

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Unfortunately, there have been and will continue to be some who are let go, transitioned, and upgraded to volunteer.

***SO WHAT DO YOU DO NEXT?***

# 1.

## STAY CALM

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I'M SO SORRY. I'm sorry that you and your family are going through this. I know what it's like and it's tough! I can vividly remember holding the letter saying that I had been let go. I looked at it and thought, "What am I going to say to my wife?" I went home in the middle of the day to let her know that we would be looking for a new job.

The very first thing to remember is to stay calm. God has you and will protect you. That first day is not the time to pick up the phone and try to find another job.

Here are five ways to help you stay calm.

### **1. Mental Health Care**

Your mind needs a much deserved break and your heart needs time to process this loss. You might watch a movie, go for a bike ride or do something that is refreshing and entertaining to you.

### **2. Speak the Blessings**

The Bible is full of God's promises for protection and provision. Pray His words and meditate on them.

- ◆ Psalm 91
- ◆ Ephesians 6:13-18
- ◆ 1 Kings 17:14-16

- ✦ Deuteronomy 28:1-14
- ✦ Numbers 6:22-27
- ✦ Jeremiah 17:7-8

### **3. Don't Burn Bridges**

It is much easier to lay your head down at night when you know that you have done everything you can to stay in good relation with everyone.

*Romans 12:18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men.*

Here is a truth that has served me well many times: You never know when you might need to walk across that bridge again.

Even if you're feeling hurt, don't pour poison on your way out. You are more than your emotions. Commit to only say uplifting and positive things about the church and staff. It's like your mom always said, "If you don't have anything nice to say, don't say anything at all."

### **4. End Well**

- ✦ They will remember you more by how you leave than by how you started.
- ✦ How we end one season is how we enter the next season.

### **5. Set the Next Person Up for Success**

You will feel a sense of confidence and closure when you do all you can to prepare the ministry for the next person.

- ✦ Organize files and leave them for the team.
- ✦ Talk about how you are excited for the future of the church and the ministry.
- ✦ Speak about ways they can support the new person.

# 2.

## STAY CONFIDENT

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**T**alk about a punch to the gut! Being let go, even in the midst of a pandemic, feels awful. Mentally, you can tell yourself that it was for financial reasons, but there will still be some mind games that try to drag you down. It took me a long time to regain my confidence. For months I was second guessing myself in fear of another transition.

Here are five ways to stay confident.

### **1. Welcome to the Club**

You're not alone! Many people have been let go at some point in their ministry. It's hard to believe it right now, but you will be better on the other side.

### **2. Make Time to Process Your Feelings**

If we don't take time to properly deal with the pain of being let go, it can feel like we were burned or used by the Church. We owe it to ourselves, our family and those we lead to get help when needed. Talk with a professional and don't let offensive feelings take root.

### **3. Don't Let Shame In**

Shame will come banging at your door, in an attempt to make you feel embarrassed and even more isolated. Remember the family and friends who support you no matter what. Let people in, not shame.

#### **4. God Provides**

Pastor Jon Chasteen says, "God wants you to worship the Provider more than the provision." When we focus on the Provider, our confidence is secure in the source of our provision.

*Matthew 6:25-27 Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*

#### **5. You Are Called**

Take a moment and remember when the Lord first called you into ministry, and why you answered the call.

*Romans 11:29 For the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.*

You are gifted, talented and anointed. Don't give up.

# 3.

## STAY CONNECTED

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I am sure that you have preached a message or taught a class about how Christians are not meant to do life alone. Now is the time to heed your own words. Lean into your community to hold you up and give you strength.

### 1. God's Grace

Grace is so much more than unmerited favor. The Greek word for grace is *charis* which “refer(s) to God freely extending Himself (His favor, grace), reaching (inclining) to people because He is disposed to bless (be near) them (Strong's 5485).” God wants to show His kindness to you, bless you, and work all things out for your good.

*Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.*

### 2. Family and Friends

These are the people who know us best. Choose wisely who you connect with in this time. Choose people who will lift you up and keep you focused on the Lord. This is not the time to rally friends who want to talk about why you were mistreated and why you should be upset.

### 3. A Staffing Firm

Ministry staffing professionals like the *Slingshot Group* can advise you on everything from updating your resume to

nailing a fantastic interview, and recommend churches that are a good fit for you.

#### **4. Denomination Leaders**

If you are connected to a denomination, now is the time to lean in to them for support and encouragement.

# NEXT STEPS

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## **10 Questions to Help Keep Your Job:**

- 1) What amount will I offer financially?
- 2) What skills and talents do I have to offer?
- 3) What can I do to increase my creative ability?
- 4) What is my ministry's temporary rally cry?
- 5) What is one thing I can do to become more F.A.T.?
- 6) What new resources will help me find lead indicators?
- 7) What are the wins within my ministry?
- 8) What is one problem I'd like to solve right now?
- 9) Who can I encourage today?
- 10) What needs to be communicated right now?

## **10 Questions to Help You Transition:**

- 1) What is the worst thing that could possibly happen?
- 2) If that happens, will I be ok? How can I rebuild?
- 3) How has God been faithful to me in the past?
- 4) What does the Lord say about me?
- 5) What does the Lord say about my calling?
- 6) Who do I already know that can help me?
- 7) Who do I need to know that can help me?
- 8) How can I get to know that person?
- 9) How do I want to be remembered?
- 10) What one thing can I do to prepare for what is next?

# CONCLUSION

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We are living in a time where most people have more questions than answers. Our leaders are figuring things out as they go, and no one has been here before. Let's rally around our leaders and show our support by using our time, talents and treasures.

My prayer is that the Church will rise in influence in this season. Light shines brightest in darkness. You were created for such a time as this!

*Matthew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.*

# RYAN LATHAM

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Ryan has been in ministry for over 2 decades. He began full-time ministry in 1999 while earning his degree in Organizational Leadership from Vanguard University. He is a leadership junkie and loves the learning process. One of his favorite moments is meeting the great Zig Zigler in September of 2006. Ryan loves to travel and speak around the nation and the world.

Ryan is also the author of the book *Prepared For Impact - 12 Keys To Unlock You and Your Ministry*. He is originally from Southern California and in 2011 moved to Oklahoma City with his wife, Sarah, and their four children. His favorite movie is *Remember the Titans*, and he enjoys running and relaxing on the beach.