

Selected highlights from Richard Black on covid's consequences

For church leaders it's carnage because the usual ways of being have been disrupted. People feel drained and despondent: "This is not what I signed up for."

Many church leaders want to get back to ministry as they know it and 'normality' leaving frustration, weariness and anxiety behind.

The usual rhythms are disrupted and there is a drift to consumerism at cost of discipleship with Jesus.

Yet, there is a wonderful discipleship challenge in this season. - less discipleship being rediscovered than lack of discipleship being exposed.

Many church leaders over-identify with their role and the key markers of success they run with such as numbers, church income etc. But what happens when markers are not met, due to covid and lockdowns? Some question and conclude their calling is false!

Despite our theology, leaders have emotional need for numeric growth. When we focus our goals on our unconscious emotional definitions of success that will never lead us to a good place.

To the despondent: In this liminal time this is NOT the time to be despondent because God will not be mocked in this to see his church fall.

Leaders need to be re-examining what they are capable of. Typically, this involves self-care and lowering performance aspirations to match this. We need to be willing to reconsider what ministry is really all about. Have we been captivated by the 'what we do' instead of 'why we do it'?

Consider St Paul, called to reach Gentiles and is then imprisoned for last 5 years of his life. He is put into lock-down where he evangelised the prison and takes to writing letters - and perhaps his greatest lasting impact.

- What do I do out of duty verse what increases my closeness to the Lord?
- What do I hear the Spirit saying to me that gives a sense of his Kingdom?
- Renewing a sense of love to the community around us in love and service.

About pastoring amidst conspiracy theories: Our focus needs to be focused not on what the enemy is doing but what God is doing such as the 3 men in the Babylonian fire who would not bow down in to the idol. If Jesus were walking with us would he want us to join the dots towards a conspiracy theory at work around us or to focus on the needs for now before us? Bring focus back to a faith focus and what fulfils.