

KEEPING YOUR LEADERSHIP EDGE DURING CATASTROPHE

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1. You will have a catastrophic event someday. You just will.
2. Stress jostles your cup. When you jostle a cup, what spills out is what is inside.
3. Catastrophe will affect you personally, and probably permanently.
4. Catastrophe is disorienting. Find some landmarks.
5. You must understand lostness. Being “lost” is when your mental image of where you are does not correspond with the actual reality around you. (See Laurence Gonzalez, *Deep Survival*).
6. Leading through catastrophe means living from a new reality. You have to make decisions based on that reality, not the way it was or the way you wish it were. (In other words, don’t be lost!)
7. Just because you lose stuff, it does not mean that your life purpose is over.
8. God never stopped loving you.
9. God never stopped meeting your daily needs. That’s His job; He said so. Matthew 6:19-21.
10. Going through catastrophe, you must simplify your priorities: Survive one day to the next, and take care of your people. The most important thing today is that you survive to tomorrow. That’s your action plan for the day. Every day.
11. You must prepare for catastrophe in advance. It will come; will you be ready?
12. God likely prepared you in advance for the catastrophe. Maybe that’s a part of His Ephesians 2:10 plan for you (προετοιμάζω *proetoimazo*, to prepare beforehand).
13. Guess what—God likely prepared something for you for after the catastrophe. Already.
14. Overcommunicate with your people. It’s better that they hear too often than not enough. Don’t forget that their stress has gone up exponentially, and they need frequent reassurance.
15. Keep your sense of humor.
16. You’ll have to both show emotion and suppress it. Show you’re human, but don’t lose the ability to make decisions. Find a quiet place to cry if you have to.
17. In the plan of God, catastrophe will not be a distraction. It will be your new work. When you get to the other side of it, there will be things and emotions that linger but there will also be a new world waiting for you.
18. Catastrophe will destroy, sure. But it will also open up wonderful new opportunities. Look for them. Don’t lose your creative, exploratory, wonder-filled edge. Run toward, not away from, new opportunities and new ways of thinking.
19. Your instinct will be to clinch; to tighten up and retreat into the known. If you can even find the known, that is. You might spend a lot of time searching for it, only to realize that it’s no longer there. For us, the Black Forest wildfire destroyed the life we knew. We had no “known” to find, only a new world. But it did not destroy our relationships, and that’s what carried us through.
20. Wisdom is in knowing when to act and when to let things ride. Stuff will work out, so just chill.
21. I learned from the fire that what I got back after the fire was what I gave away before the fire.
22. After catastrophe, you’re going to have a new perspective on what really matters. Relish it. In some ways, you are free. Live joyously in your freedom.
23. Don’t forget that all of us long for “that city,” just like Abraham did. None of us has arrived, and none of us will find our permanent place of peace until we beam into the Eternal City. All of this will burn. Put your values somewhere else, and build what counts while you can.

WHAT TO DO FOR SOMEONE WHO HAS GONE THROUGH/IS GOING THROUGH CATASTROPHE:

- Don’t ask, just give, in this order: cash, Walmart gift cards, checks. (For this type of situation.)
- Other gift cards may work, if you know they’re from stores that the person will use.
- Special touches are wonderful, and your creativity could be a blessing. Just be careful that . . .
- . . . Giving them “stuff” may burden them; ask first, and accept their answer.
- Please avoid giving the person a new burden.
- What do you say to them? “I’m sorry. I love you. I’m praying for you.” That’s all you need to say.
- “Christian pharmacy” (prescribing a cliché or a verse to the suffering) is insensitive and may be highly irritating. Avoid it. You don’t have to give an answer to why their event happened; that’s not their need of the moment and the truth is that you don’t know what God’s reason was for allowing it. Don’t try to “correct” their expressions of grief. They need to work through their pain. Paul himself had to live with pain and fear and was comforted—not rebuked—by Titus (2 Cor. 7:5-6).