

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is...

A while back, I attended the North American Leaders Conference in North Carolina. One of our speakers was Dr. Dan Allender. He had us laughing and crying all in the space of a minute, and it was wonderful to hear him tell the story Jesus is writing in his life. He spoke about being a leader and the things you go through. I'm adapting Dr. Dan's message here and putting it in the context of Mission Adventures.*

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is: To Be In Crisis

When we start things, when we blaze trails, or when we just exert leadership, crisis comes our way. Some study somewhere** said that big-time leaders average eight or nine crises per month. Thankfully, I don't have quite that many—but I certainly do have a crisis here and there—some of them of my own doing.

Experiencing all these crises tempts us to insulate ourselves. Crisis has a very personal cost, so the tendency is to try to protect ourselves, to care less. When those kids come and they tell me about how their sister is a cutter, or about how they can't

relate at all with their dad, or how their uncle hurt them when they were little, it starts to hurt, so I try to insulate.

The truth is, the only way to face crisis, (after crisis, after crisis), is to surrender. The only way to get through is to give up rights and surrender to God. If it means crying one more time this week, then so be it—let the tears flow.

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is: To Be Confused

Creating a Mission Adventures ministry involves a dozen variables. Just when you figure out the transportation, the team leader calls and adds three kids—where in the world am I going to get three more seats in our vehicles? And do we have three more beds? All this complexity is kind of like a four-dimensional Rubik's cube. The chaos, the changes, the complexity can drive the most stable of us to despair.

The temptation is to try to control it. Trust me, this doesn't work. When it comes to feeding, housing, and transporting 45

eighth graders in a foreign country, the chaos can be so overwhelming sometimes that we just want to be dogmatic.

The only way through the confusion is curiosity. That may sound strange, but think about it. When you're overwhelmed, you can either go crazy and try to grasp everything, or you can ask why, you can seek a way forward when you understand which way is up. Cultivate your inner question-maker. As things swirl around you, ask yourself what's going on and how can you accomplish the goal. This can change your perspective and can lead to a working-together moment that overcome adversity.

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is: To Be In Conflict

When we do stuff for God, he invites us to do it together. When we do it together, there's gonna be conflict. You may be a world champion conflict-avoider, but that doesn't mean there's no conflict—that just means you're avoiding resolution. So whether there's tension in your staff, or between you and the youth worker, there's

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conflict somewhere.

For some of us, the temptation is to avoid conflict at all costs, to placate, to let it slide, or to think and even believe everything is our fault. But this doesn't really solve anything, it either delays the resolution, or slowly kills us inside. For others, we're like bulls and we fear nothing and charge into conflict easily with lots of things to say, and not all of them helpful.

The cure for this is delight, awe, and gratitude. When we believe that this creature in front of us is not a physical manifestation of spiritual evil, but instead made in the image of God, then we can begin to resolve conflict. Be in awe of your fellow staff, in awe of how they're fearfully and wonderfully made. Then your words will bless instead of curse. If you can find delight in this youth worker who's misunderstood your every move so far, then the conflict is halfway to being resolved.

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is: To Be Isolated

Betrayal comes to all of us in leadership. Hopefully it's just small ones, like your staff not following through on what they said they'd do—leaving you to do their job

too. Other times you get the big hurtful ones. And most likely you have been on the giving side of betrayal too.

These gut-twisting moments can suck the life right out of us. We tell ourselves that we can never ever suffer anything like this again, and we isolate ourselves from the very ones that can walk us out of this deep forest.

The only cure for this isolation is to risk again. The only cure is to cry out—to God of course, but to those around you. You must, must, must confess your broken-heartedness and your sin. Raise your hand. Get on your knees. Find people to share life with at a deep level so God can heal you through their kindness and acceptance. Of course you know this. You've felt Christ's embrace through real, deep, fellowship—that koinonia that reflects the three-in-one nature of our God. There is no other way—we have to risk again, or the isolation will create bitterness, and we will be so much less than God intends.

To Pioneer Mission Adventures Is: To Be Exhausted

Ministry can be tiring. Doing MA is hard work. Sometimes we put in 18-hour days. There's a spiritual and an emotional

component to leadership, to working with people, that requires energy in multiple dimensions. It is costly across our entire being to push back at the darkness.

The temptation here is to keep going, to keep on until we drop. Sometimes we get sick just 'cuz we haven't slept or eaten right. We keep going on the rhythm of past joy. We lie to ourselves by saying that the cost of following Jesus is exhaustion. We're not working hard enough or producing enough if we aren't hurting, right?

The cure is called Sabbath. It's not taking Sunday off. It's about creating space in life to rest. Recreation is not rest. I tend to think that work is defined as those things I have to do (dealing with my email). So that must mean that rest is the things that I want to do, (playing Xbox 'til 3:30 a.m.). No, true rest, true Sabbath is soooo much more than recreation. Rest is doing those things that restore my joy—that reinforce my connection with the Father. It's found in those quiet moments with a cup of coffee and the Bible on the iPad and a Chris Tomlin song playing on the iPod. But it can also be found in learning how to cook, or in training your dog, or in discovering something new about the nature of our God, (Laminin!). Rest is about restoration,



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doing those things that put gas back in your tank.

Leading in the Opposite Spirit
If any of this sounds familiar to you, it should. Dr. Dan's message to us is about facing crisis, chaos, conflict, isolation and exhaustion by reacting in the opposite spirit. We overcome these things through surrender, curiosity, delight, connection and joy. This opposite spirit thing is the theme of Loren's book, Making Jesus Lord, and if you haven't read it yet, maybe you'll find some joy and restoration in it.

So have yourself a Happy Easter, and if I don't see you at WAVES next week... umm, then I'll wish you were here with us!

Peace,

Craig

**Keep in mind, this is my adaptation of Dr. Dan's message. I may have misheard him, I may have even completely missed the point of what he was saying. So um, read at your own risk! Oh, and Dr. Allender if you're reading this—thanks so much for sharing with us at the N.A.L.C.!*

***Studies show that 47% of statistics in Craig's writing are made up on the spot.*