

What do I do, when my enemy is my brother ??

In the wake of the tumultuous year 2020, we are yet in crisis in 2021. We are witnessing a great divide in our government. We are witnessing death, as in the types of death that come with a civil war. The loss of life on the American battlefield - The battle on Capital Hill.

As opposing flags stormed and breached our nation's highest institution this week, like war horses in an invasion, we witnessed a small army's attempt to overtake and even take the lives of fellow citizens. The U.S. Capitol had been breached, ram-shacked, exploited and overrun, in the first few days of 2021.

We thought we had seen the worst on the heels of the death of George Floyd, as the cities of Minneapolis, Portland and Seattle burned for days; businesses were destroyed, as the national guard were brought in to calm what appeared to be a civil war.

Are we in Crisis ?

Time Magazine says - "America Is Being Torn Apart".

The Hill says - "Analyst say that America is the most divided since the Civil War."

The New York Times asks - "Are we more divided than ever ?"

The Wall Street Journal reports - "How the United States became a divided nation."

A group of us have formed a small book club, with Ron Atkinson's help, to carefully review Mac Pier's book - New York Disrupted. In the book, Mac talks about the opportunities that are carefully packaged inside crisis. He calls it disruption. Similar to John Lewis', good trouble ... in other words, we are to capture good opportunities trapped in bad events. We should find the good in crisis.

In the book, Mac carefully takes us on a journey of the history of New York and how good fruit has mysteriously and undeniably come from the disruptions of crisis.

He writes, “**God has providentially used these disruptions to cause us to see the world differently and more tenderly. We saw the brokenness and fragility of the world, and in particular, our city - in technicolor.**”

JFK once said that in Chinese, the word weiji has dual meaning – both crisis and opportunity. Well, JFK didn’t know Chinese very well, but the wisdom in the analogy was indeed solid! You see, inside every battle, there is hidden victory. Within every crisis, there is indeed opportunity. But, it requires spiritual vision to see it.

Without the crisis of darkness, Thomas Edison would not have made one thousand attempts to seize the opportunity of electric light.

I submit to you my friends to hold fast to Godly eyesight / vision in the midst of crisis. Without the godly vision that Mac explains in his book, we will never see the hidden opportunities to lift our nation to Jesus for positive outcomes, in our nation, cities, neighborhoods, jails, schools, and families.

If we (God’s People) are too emotionally charged by crisis, we may never see the opportunities for the Gospel.

The balance we need is found through prayer.

I asked the Lord, what he wanted me to share today and what examples in Scripture could help us frame the current state of our world in Crisis. The Lord laid upon my heart, King David - a man very familiar with crisis, a man who often found opportunity in crisis.

King Saul had become jealous of the young warrior, David. And, for the first time, he created a great divide in the fabric and kingdom of the nation, Israel - perhaps like the national divides that we see today, throughout our country and communities. These divides come from the

seeds of jealousy, power, greed, arrogance, error, hatred, poverty, injustice, and religion – our differences.

We all experience differences in our society, but Saul had a plan to resolve his differences with David. “Saul planned to have, David, his son in law, killed by the hands of the Philistines”. You see, this was the ultimate family feud playing out on the national stage of CNN, MSNBC, and FOX NEWS. It was the Trump family against the Biden family, the democratic family against the republican family, the rich against the poor, the black against the white.

What do I do, when my enemy is too my brother?

King David gives us answers of how to extract opportunity from crisis:

1. David recognized that while Saul was his enemy, God's hand of grace and destiny was yet upon Saul.

To the messenger who brought the good news that David's enemy, President Saul, had fallen? David replied, “Your blood is on your own head, for your own mouth has testified against you, saying, 'I have killed the LORD's anointed”. The messenger himself was then killed by David.

Though Jesus had not yet come to teach the Father's heart of love, somehow David had acquired a love for his enemies.

He could have very easily killed Saul himself, but instead, upon hearing of Saul's death, David and all his men tore their clothes in sorrow when they heard the news. They mourned and wept and fasted all day for Saul and Jonathan – their enemies.

2. David never rejoiced in the downfall of his brother, instead he mourned, lamented, fasted and prayed for him.

Upon hearing of the death of king Saul's general (Abner), David commanded Joab (his own general, who actually killed Abner), “Tear your clothes and put on burlap. Mourn for Abner.” And King David himself walked behind Abner's processional to the grave.

3. When my enemy is my brother, I should defend my brother and my sister, according to David.

This is sometimes difficult, when our brothers and sisters have different hues of skin or different textures of hair, or perhaps a foreign accent. Nonetheless, how does David bring himself to defending his enemy?

There were those in the enemy's camp who wanted David to be their King, instead of Saul's successor, King Ishbosheth. One day, two captains in King Ishbosheth's army, two brothers, went to Ishbosheth's house and killed David's enemy, thinking that it would be good news to David. But, David said to the enemy captains, "Someone once told me, 'Saul is dead,' thinking he was bringing me good news. But, I seized him and killed him at Ziklag. How much more should I reward evil men who have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed?"

Absalom, David's own son, became an enemy to David and the army of Israel. His son desired to split his father army, in a quest to overthrow his father's kingdom. The battles were so fierce that 20,000 men died in one day alone. During the battle, Absalom, David's son and enemy was captured and killed. While risky, who would go and tell King David the news of his son's death?

When David heard the news, he was overcome with great emotion. He went up to his room and cried and cried, "O my son, Absalom! My son, my son, Absalom! If only I had died instead of you! As all the people heard of the king's deep grief for his son, the joy of that day's victory over David's enemy was turned into deep sadness."

Today, we lament the fighting in our nation, brothers fighting brothers, the burning fires, the Facebook posts, even the deaths of our brothers and sisters on Capital Hill, and we seek opportunities hidden in disruption.

Abner, Saul's general, once said to David's army. "Must we always be killing each other? Don't you realize that bitterness is the only result? When will you call off your men from chasing their brothers?"

As I close, I'll restate a portion of my opening:

Inside every battle, there is hidden victory. Within every crisis, there is indeed opportunity. But, it requires spiritual vision to see it.

Today, we put on our corrective lenses of love, in such a way that we stop seeing our brothers and sisters as agents of difference, but as opportunities for love.

Today, we stop the chasing, the fighting, the bickering over the sins of our nation, over the evils of our election, and we mourn and lament for the souls of those with whom we disagree.

Today, we lament this very division in our country, the killing of our brothers and sisters, the mass incarceration of our brothers and sisters, the lack of education and poverty of our children. We lament and mourn, like King David, the downfall of our nation.

May the Lord give us opportunity, in exchange for our disruptions?

Amen

- joe mcdaniel

January 9th, 2021