

Navigating Different COVID-19 Recovery Convictions

by **Costi Hinn** April 28, 2020

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If there is one word to describe how we must navigate re-assimilation amid COVID-19, it's this: grace.

A friend of mine who happens to be the Vice President of a prominent seminary and no stranger to the challenges in leadership recently tweeted words that accurately predict the current (and coming) landscape in homes, families, and friendships.

Charles Smith wrote: "Prediction: one of the most challenging aspects of the #COVID19 recovery will be disagreements over acceptable post-COVID social norms between friends and family. Hurt feelings will abound if we're not careful. Extend lots of grace. Everyone is different."

He couldn't be more right. This reality is especially going to hit hard for pastors — starting with the dynamic between staff and leadership teams.

I believe one of the ways that the enemy will seek to divide our ranks within the church is by tempting us to use our opinions against each other. If the Devil has his way, we'll be throwing stones of accusation from all sides, calling the cautious people "soft," labeling the optimists of being "reckless." More than that, the enemy especially loves when we cement ourselves in political corners; adding opinionated fuel to the already tumultuous fire of conflict.

Things can get ugly — very quickly.

This is a new frontier of ministry for an entire generation of leaders. We must recognize the challenges and begin to determine how we will face COVID recovery before it erodes valuable relationships.

Navigating our varying COVID convictions is a non-negotiable for any leader who desires not only a physically healthy organization, but an emotionally healthy one too.

We're Going to Be Different

The pastoral staff I am a part of is one example of taking differing approaches to COVID quarantine and ministry, and that's okay. Our different approaches have even become helpful because we can diversify our ministry efforts like different members of the body should (1 Corinthians 12:12). Further, we are sharpened in our ability to love one another regardless of unique circumstances. One of our pastors has vulnerable family members and works exclusively from home. One had a baby during the crisis and needed others to carry the added load while he went on paternity leave. Another can serve more openly in the community right now, while another endured unexpected back surgery and is mostly bound to bed during recovery time. It takes a great deal of sensitivity and understanding to navigate how each member of our team is approaching the scenario. It will continue to require such understanding as we approach re-assimilation with friends, family, and our church. The reality is, we are all a unique blend of experiences, vulnerabilities, preferences, tendencies, and talents.

Perhaps you relate to one or more aspects of the following COVID-19 profiles:

Cautious: Those who primarily work from home, follow every aspect of CDC regulations, and prefer to stay conservative about their re-assimilation plan.

Confident: Those who don't wear a mask, spend greater amounts of time with people outside their home and don't mind tight proximity, obey the law but don't necessarily worry much about going the extra-mile with precautions, lean towards re-assimilation now regardless of the news, and some think this crisis may be blown way out of proportion.

"Cauti-dent": Those who find themselves doing and feeling a little bit of everything in both the cautious and the confident profile.

There are certainly a few more profiles that could be added here, including those who have strong opinions about churches holding services online instead of gathering physically, obedience to government instructions, and conspiracy theories about numerous aspects of the crisis, but those views do not necessarily help us navigate re-assimilation.

It's Okay to Be Different

The temptation is to look at these profiles and let your opinion dominate your perspective.

For highly confident optimists, others are much too conservative. Perhaps, some would even accuse others of living by fear and not faith — which can be true of all of us at times.

For cautious types, confident optimists may be too relaxed as the “what ifs” begin to creep into their minds. They think, *what do we gain by re-assimilating so quickly? Isn't it better to be safe than sorry?*

As the spiral of opinion leads you downward, you must formulate a game plan that takes you upward. It's okay to be different! To have a healthy family, a healthy team, and a healthy church there must room for different opinions and experiences. These differences often stretch us and help us grow together and learn from each other. We need to respect one another and realize that *everyone* is navigating a new frontier.

A healthy relational ecosystem allows for “different,” and even leverages it to help us make decisions.

Attitude Determines Altitude

You may have a healthy culture in your church, organization, or family. Conversely, you may be seeing tension rising and anticipate this issue being a major challenge. Whatever the case, your attitude is going to determine your altitude. In other words, whether or not you lead yourself and others above the fray and towards a higher perspective depends on attitude.

Here are 4 attitudes for COVID-19 recovery that will strengthen your ability to navigate differing views and approaches:

1. Optimistic people are a blessing to my life. It keeps me hopeful about the future and enables me to embrace uncertainty as opportunity.

2. Cautious people are a blessing to my life. It keeps me sensitive to the needs and concerns of others and enables me to make prudent decisions.

3. Different gifts and approaches make us all more effective. Pride demands that everyone do things the way we demand. Read 1 Corinthians 12 and celebrate different gifts.

4. People matter more than my opinion. Being in healthy relationships with people is a privilege that requires me to love others above myself. When I am highly opinionated, I can needlessly hurt others.

Choose Love

In the end, these attitudes prepare our hearts and minds to do one thing above all else: *choose love*. Preserving valuable relationships and developing healthy teams,

churches, and families is more important than winning arguments, or being (more) right.

Look, when this crisis begins to wind down, there will be plenty of people who got some things right, and plenty of people who got some things wrong. There will be those who blew things out of proportion, and those who didn't take things as seriously as they should've. Some will take longer to come back to the office, others will rush in (or are already there).

What will it matter if we re-assimilate only to end up "socially distant" again not because of a virus, but because of our inability to love others who approach COVID-19 differently than we do?

Choose love.

Costi Hinn