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## Stetzer: Real crisis of COVID-19 still to come

by Tess Schoonhoven, posted Tuesday, March 24, 2020 (one month ago)

WHEATON, Ill. (BP) -- Ed Stetzer is calling pastors to move to the next stage of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Churches have been absorbed in executing the livestreaming of their services, Stetzer said in a Facebook video, but the true crisis is coming in the weeks ahead.



Ed Stetzer is calling pastors to move to the next stage of dealing with the COVID-19 crisis. Screen capture from Facebook

"Move on from the freak-out of church practices, because we've got a real crisis coming very soon," Stetzer said.

As COVID-19 continues to spread across the country, Stetzer challenged viewers to prepare for a diagnosis among individuals they know directly.

"Church leaders are not tracking with where we need to be," Stetzer said. "This is not a crisis of online church."

Although that aspect of the COVID-19 crisis is real, Stetzer said the attention needs to be shifted to the crisis that will begin to directly affect all church communities.

Showing a "flatten the curve" diagram, Stetzer reminded viewers of what the isolation measures cities have been seeking to implement are trying to accomplish.

"There is still misinformation, a lot of times coming from evangelicals," Stetzer said.

Stetzer challenged individuals who may be going to untrustworthy news sites, which may have downplayed the seriousness of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"Christians, you need to speak to one another and stop this," Stetzer said.

Although getting online and communicating with the church community is vital and should be continued, Stetzer said, there are multiple phases of the pandemic coming, and phase one -- pause and pivot -- is over.

Stetzer said he is concerned pastors are not moving on from phase one.

"I'm concerned that many of our churches are not displaying an appropriate level of urgency right now," Stetzer said. "You've got to move to what's coming next in this crisis."

Phase two is to prepare and plan, he said.

"It's not a crisis of streaming," Stetzer said. "It's a crisis of fear, a crisis soon of sickness and sometimes death, and it's a crisis for the marginalized far more than it probably is for you and me."

Stetzer linked to detailed information on each phase of COVID-19 to come through an article he published in Christianity Today.

Stetzer explained that according to many experts, the United States is headed in the same direction with COVID-19 as Italy.

Because of this trajectory, Stetzer said, pastors need to get to phase two now.

Among the preparations Stetzer said church leaders need to make is weathering a financial crunch, caring for the sick and shut-ins, counseling those with mental illness and addictions, virtual small groups and seeking the prosperity of their community.

"This week you need to be asking, 'What are we going to do if we start to hear of people dying in our community?'" Stetzer said.

Plans must be made to move into the phase three, which is to engage and execute, Stetzer said.

Helping those in need in your communities can begin right now, Stetzer said.

"We need you to be mobilizing the church right now," Stetzer said.

Stetzer noted that leaders need to acknowledge that the pandemic has not gotten as bad as it's going to be.

"We've got to start focusing on external mission," Stetzer explained.

Eventually, Stetzer said, the church will move to phase four: to recover and reemerge.

"Right now, the things that you do today will impact how ultimately you will recover tomorrow," Stetzer said. "I really want to encourage you to take this as seriously as you should."

The hope, Stetzer said, is that when the crisis is over and the nation reemerges from it, Christians will be remembered for their love and courage. COVID-19 brings a crucial moment for churches, he said.

"This is the time to show and share the love of Jesus," Stetzer said.

"We don't need to run away; we don't need to hide," Stetzer continued. "We can't."

Now is the time when churches need to be geared up and ready to help, Stetzer said.

The question is not just how to save the church, Stetzer said. The question is, how do churches join Jesus on mission during this crisis?

"The church needs to rise up," Stetzer said. "Right now, the Lord's calling us to ask, 'How will He send us into our community?'

"We have to mobilize the people of God, Stetzer said. "This is our moment."

Stetzer also hosts a podcast dealing with leadership in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and is a part of providing other resources in this time of crisis through [Coronavirusandthechurch.com](https://www.coronavirusandthechurch.com).

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Tess Schoonhoven is a Baptist Press staff writer.