

LEADING THROUGH CRISIS

MASTERMIND PARTICIPANT GUIDE

*Based on the teaching
by John C. Maxwell*

- ▶ Learn practical ways to maneuver through times of difficulty and adversity
- ▶ Effectively battle distractions during times of crisis and stress
- ▶ Adopt successful thinking habits to think your way through any crisis

The
JOHN MAXWELL
Team

SESSION 1 | DEFINING A CRISIS

In the first part of John Maxwell's lesson on "Leading Through Crisis," he offers his first main teaching point, Crisis is quite common. During a crisis, bad leadership precipitates a faster fall while good leadership offers steadiness and perseverance.

As John taught, there are never two good consecutive days in a leader's life, which means that leaders should be used to rough times. John says that a crisis is several consecutive bad days that you can't walk away from.

Ultimately, John defines a crisis as "an intense time of difficulty requiring a decision that will be a turning point."

With everything going on in the world right now, our current global situation certainly meets that definition! The good news is, as John pointed out, this crisis—like all crises—will eventually pass. The challenge for the leader is to stay strong and steady through the duration.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Why do you think a crisis makes it easier to distinguish between good and bad leaders?

2. How do you define what constitutes a crisis? Why?

3. What experience do you have in leading during a time of crisis?

4. What is one lesson from that experience that you can share with the group?

5. In your opinion, what makes a crisis seem so urgent?

6. How should a leader combat that sense of urgency without seeming disconnected from the situation?

7. How should leaders define reality in times of crisis?

8. How should leaders communicate that reality to their teams?
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APPLICATION:

Decide where you will turn for information when defining reality in times of crisis. Think of the ways that you as a leader will get helpful, accurate data and insight from trusted sources.

SESSION 2 | BATTLING DISTRACTIONS DURING A CRISIS

In the second part of John's lesson, he acknowledges that a crisis is a distraction for a leader. It pulls a leader away from their life focus and towards something else. Whether it's the breaking news alerts on the evening news, or a panicked report from the Stock Market, there are plenty of things seeking to pull a leader's attention away from the issue at hand.

As a result, John shares that leaders experience three things:

1. **Mind Wandering:** Thinking about what could happen instead of focusing on what is happening.
2. **Negative Thinking:** Feeling as if everything that could go wrong is going wrong.
3. **Uncertain Anxiety:** Fear of the unknown which amplifies other fears.

When leaders get distracted, they lose sight of reality, lose touch with hope, and fall prey to anxiety, which in turn infects their people. As John teaches, just because someone else's sky is falling it doesn't mean the leader's sky is too! Leaders must discipline themselves to stay focused in times of crisis.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In your opinion, why is it so easy for a leader to get distracted during a crisis?

2. Of the three distraction traps that John shared, which are you most susceptible too in times of crisis: mind wandering, negative thinking, or uncertain anxiety? Why?

3. In your experience, what are some good ways a leader can maintain focus during times of distraction?

4. In your experience, what are some helpful ideas for positive thinking during times of challenge?

5. In your experience, what are some good ways to combat anxiety and fear during times of uncertainty?

6. Have you ever experienced a leader who got distracted during a crisis? How did that distracted leader impact their people?

7. What was the result of that leader's distracted leadership?

8. What is your best advice for a leader who needs to “pull themselves together”? Why?

APPLICATION:

Think back to the answer you gave for question two and write down a distraction defense plan to help you combat that particular weakness. It can be as simple as asking a mentor for insight, working collaboratively with other leaders, or limiting your social media, but make it something you can execute with ease during times of stress. Share your plan with the group and ask for suggested improvements.

SESSION 3 | CHARACTER IN A CRISIS

In John's third and fourth points from his Leading During a Crisis lesson, he talks about the ways that crisis reveals the character of a leader: It shows what a leader is on the inside, and puts a leader's ability to adapt to shifting circumstances on display. As John said, "You're not made in a crisis—you're revealed."

Often people think that a crisis forges character, but that's not true: Our choices shape our character, and a crisis simply reveals the results of those choices. Leaders who lapse into complaining mode, or who begin blaming others when things get tough, are leaders whose bad choices are being brought to light. The good news is that the adversity that unmasks a leader today can build character in that leader tomorrow—if the leader is willing to learn from the mistake.

Which brings John to his next teaching point—leaders can learn to shift for the better, even in the midst of crisis. Just like successful football coaches are able to make adjustments at halftime, great leaders can adapt to the uncertainty of the moment and find a proactive solution that creates forward momentum.

Adaptable leaders can, as John says, turn adversity into advantage.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you agree with John's statement that crisis reveals a leader's character rather than makes it? Why?

2. Why do you think crisis is such an effective test of a leader's internal make up?

3. In your opinion, is a negative or positive perspective helpful during a crisis? Why do you think so?

4. How can a leader keep a learning posture during a crisis?

5. John spoke of the need for leaders to be adaptable during challenging times—what does adaptability mean to you?

6. What are some signs that a leader should make a shift during a time of crisis?

7. Why is conformity during times of crisis a dangerous idea for a leader?

8. Where can a leader find the strength to make a shift during times of uncertainty?

APPLICATION:

Assess your personal perspective right now. Are you thinking positively, or have negative thoughts crept in? Share with the group your assessment and ask for input on how you can stay positive or change your negative thoughts.

SESSION 4 | REAL LEADERSHIP IN CRISIS

John covered a lot of ground in his final teaching point, but he began by reminding us that leaders need to be a visible presence during times of crisis. People want to see and connect with their leader when things are uncertain, which is why John teaches that leaders should do three things: show up early, show up with clarity, and show up with hope.

Showing up early means staying aware of the situation and communicating from a position of awareness. It means clear, honest, and open communication that builds trust with our people.

Showing up with clarity means knowing the direction in which you want to move. John quoted Andy Stanley who says, “Leader can afford to be uncertain but they cannot afford to be unclear.”

Showing up with hope means having the faith that, together with your team, you can make things better. Hope is an active virtue—it doesn’t stand by, passively waiting for things to improve.

To illustrate this, John shared four observations about Mark Cole, President and CEO of the John Maxwell Enterprise, right as the COVID-19 crisis was rising:

1. Mark stayed in constant communication with his team
2. Mark delegated responsibility to other leaders
3. Mark was deliberate in his thinking
4. Mark made sure his thinking and his decisions aligned with his values

As a result, once Mark made key decisions, the ideas and creativity began to flow. And that’s how real leadership shows up during a crisis!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. Do you agree with John that leaders need to be a visible presence during times of crisis? Why?

2. How does it benefit a team when the leader is available during challenging times?

3. What do you think it means for a leader to show up early in times of crisis?

4. In your opinion, what is the difference between uncertain and unclear?

5. In what ways does clarity from leadership matter during times of crisis?

6. John called hope an active virtue—do you agree with that? Why?

7. What are the benefits to a leader delegating responsibility during a time of crisis?

8. How does it benefit a leader to keep thinking and decisions aligned with values?

APPLICATION:

Write down your top five values on a piece of paper and post them somewhere you will see them every day. During times of crisis, staying true to your values is essential.

If you don't know your values, ask your facilitator about the Values Card exercise that can help you figure out the top five things that matter most to you.