

Pastor: In order to lead most effectively during these turbulent times, it will be important to prioritize moments for your own SPIRITUAL HEALTH. Here's a short devotional to encourage you, as you navigate the roller coaster of hope.

### **SERVING PASTORS IN LIFE**

We each experience the ups and downs of hope. Some days we're hope-filled about the future and other days it seems like hope is lost. For instance, you may have:

- ✝ hoped the virus wouldn't find its way to our country, but it did.
- ✝ hoped the virus wouldn't affect our schools, sporting events or social gatherings, but it has.
- ✝ hoped the virus wouldn't disrupt our worship gatherings, but that *is* indeed the case.
- ✝ hoped the virus wouldn't affect anyone you knew, but even this has become true for many.

The Gospel of Luke reminds us of two weary travelers who shared our roller coaster of hope.

***"But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel." (Luke 24:21)***

Reread the roller coaster story of the Emmaus road disciples and observe three insights into how hope can fade.

#### **1. Hope fades when we miss seeing Jesus in our situation.**

***“But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him”(Luke 24:16).***

Pause for a moment of personal prayer:

*Jesus, open the eyes of my heart so I might see you and recognize your faithfulness during this present crisis.*

## **2. Hope fades when we ask the wrong questions.**

***“But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.” (Luke 24:21)***

Pause for a moment of personal prayer:

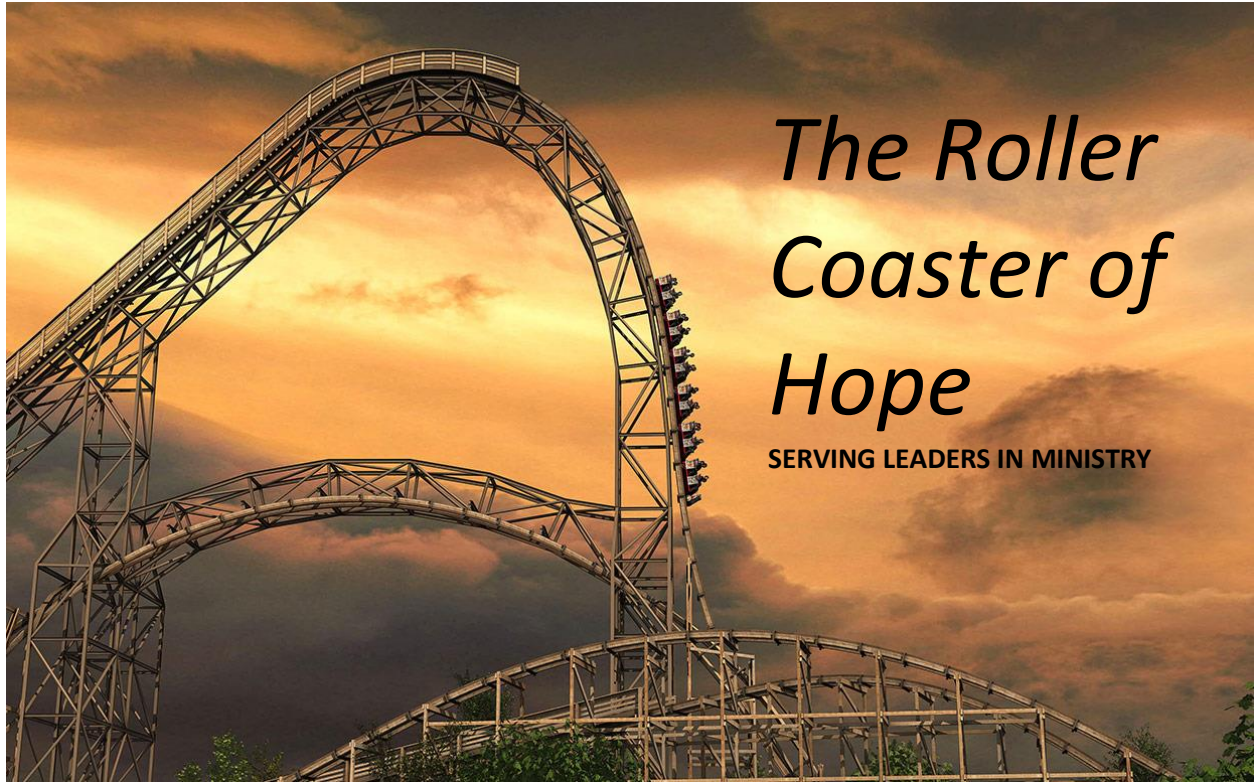
*Lord Jesus, the disciples were asking the wrong question and I don't want to do that. So please help me move beyond the obvious rational questions of, “Why”? “Why me?” Why us?” “Why now?” Instead, help me resolve the more important relational question of, “Do you care? “*

*I'm asking for your Spirit to reassure and affirm this truth in me: “He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him over for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?” (Romans 8:32). Father, because you have given me Jesus, I am confident that You will not withhold anything from me that's needed for victory and hope in this present crisis.*

## **3. Hope fades when we fail to embrace His Word.**

***“And He [Jesus] said to them, “O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!” (Luke 24:25)***

Pause for a moment of personal prayer: *Lord Jesus, I don't want to be like the disciples who were “slow of heart” and had trouble believing your Word! I know that even in the midst of a fatal epidemic, You are my refuge and my fortress. You are my Deliverer, Protector and Shield (Psalm 91:1-4). I am trusting You today to . . .”*



### **Four Mistakes to Avoid in this Pandemic**

From MarkDance.net and Lifeway Pastors

Pastors who are experiencing Corona fatigue can probably use some practical encouragement right about now. It doesn't take long to get caught up in the ministry whirlwind as we play whack-a-mole with the church challenges we have never faced before. Here are four of the most common mistakes I have observed, and you will want to avoid in the coming weeks.

#### **Avoid Making Long Term Plans**

Caregivers like us have a bias toward action—or at least we should. Sometimes, however, the wisest action is to wait for more information before you form a plan. The annoying fluidity of this pandemic deems it impossible to know what is coming next, much less when. Making reactionary long-term decisions based on limited information is panicking, not pastoring. Buckle up for at least a couple of months of this mess and stay as flexible as possible.

#### **Avoid Ignoring the Various Authorities**

Listen to your elected officials, whether you are required to do so or not. This week, our president recommended that we meet in groups no larger than ten, which is based on input from world class professionals. Most of us did not go to medical school, so there is no pressure for us to become pandemic experts.

Many network leaders are encouraging pastors to ask, “*Should we?*” instead of “*Must we?*” Instead of just corralling church members into smaller worship services or home groups, it may also be important to creatively connect our people online until this pandemic passes. Facebook Live is a great place to start if you do not have recording equipment. Also, LifeWay Christian Resources is providing free online resources for families and groups to worship together.

### **Avoid Using Your Resources Randomly**

When frantic church members blow up our phones and inboxes are flooded with ideas on how you should serve your community, it is tempting to overcommit. It’s tempting to say, “yes” too often. As a missionary to your community, you likely already know what needs your church is equipped to meet. If you are not sure, focus on your neediest neighbors. Give priority to caring for the older generation during this season. Likewise, if there is a high percentage of children who get their meals at school, work with your school district to identify and help those children and their families. Many networks, conventions, and associations are also curating resources on their websites for pastors and churches. Finally, remember: Some of the tools that we are desperate to use today will be strategically helpful on the other side of this pandemic, like online giving and worship for the homebound.

### **Avoid Ignoring Your Family or Personal Well-Being**

People will be pulling you in all directions for the next few months, so please remember that self-care is not selfish—it is strategic. Airline attendants always remind us to, “*Secure your mask first, before assisting others.*” The best way to do this is to simply STOP, which is literally what “sabbath” means. I want to encourage you to take 3-4 mini-sabbaths a day to rest in the presence of God. Author, Peter Scazzaro refers to this ancient discipline as, “The Sacred Office.” There is no better time than now to take a moment to pause and pray. Enter your sacred office and reflect on this passage:

*Don’t worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Philippians 4:6-7 (CSB)*

When you’re ready to serve your people:

[Click here to download the sermon entitled, “The Roller Coaster Called Hope.”](#)