

# 4 Ideas for Leading During COVID

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Our school has recently sent out the rules and regulations that they will be following on campus for this fall. They are probably somewhere in the middle as far as strictness goes. Our campus will be offering online, hybrid, and in-person classes in the fall, but there will be regulations. These parameters are making us go back to the drawing board on many of our ideas, as I am sure your ministries are also doing. We are having to ask ourselves not only how we can do the events we have done in the past under these guidelines, but is it even wise to do some of these events under the current circumstances?

I am torn between two innate desires. My first and foremost desire is to minister to the spiritual health of the students on my campus. My second desire is for the health of my students and community. I do not think that these desires need to tear me apart or that one comes at the exclusion of the other. In fact, I believe that it is during these times that our gospel presence can be made known even stronger in our world and on our campuses. God has always used trying times to draw His people back to Himself. I believe that there are some principles that we can remember during these times to show our students our care for their spiritual and physical health.

## 1. Model the Gospel.

Students need to have good health habits modeled for them, not just during COVID-19. It is also essential to have an urgency for the Gospel modeled for them. The truth is they can see other people model a healthy lifestyle, and we should model that. It is only through other believers that they will see examples of real urgency for the Gospel. Our students will look to us to see how we respond to this epidemic. It is ok to have concerns and fears, but we must model giving our fears over to the Lord as we exercise good judgement and wise stewardship of our ministries and our lives. Remember God is in control. Help your students process through their fears with some of these verses.

- Psalm 34:4–5 I sought the Lord, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed.
- Psalm 46:1–3 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling.
- 1 Peter 5:7 Casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.

Help your students to take an attitude of Paul who knowing he could face death went to the very cities of the people that stoned him (Acts 14). The gospel is always dangerous. Jesus never promised it would be easy. In fact, he promised just the opposite, but the Gospel is worth everything! One of my favorite missionaries is Lottie Moon. During her missions in China she served through war, a food crisis, rebellion, and plague. All through that time she continued to share the good news of Jesus Christ boldly, even though there was great risk to her and those around her. Let us model for our students a life like Lottie's or Paul's showing the gospel is worth everything.

Is there a chance that some students and maybe some of your staff may get sick this semester? Yes. People gathering has always risked the spread of disease. Students will risk spreading disease by going to class, to each other's houses, or simply by coming back into your college

town. Does that mean we throw all reason out of the door? No. Instead we boldly proclaim the Gospel, remembering the Gospel has always gone into risky and even dangerous places, often at great cost. At the same time, we do everything in our power to reasonably keep from spreading the disease by being good role-models and having safety precautions in place.

## **2. Be a good model to your students for their health and the health of the community.**

Our students are looking to us to set the example this fall semester. Protecting our health and in turn protecting the lives of those most vulnerable is good stewardship and a Christ-like model. If we complain about the rules, our students will complain about the rules. We can give students space to vent, but let us help them keep a positive attitude by keeping a positive attitude ourselves. Our ministries should reflect the standards set by our communities and campuses. Romans 13:1-2 says, "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those that exist have been instituted by God. Therefore, whoever resists the authorities resists what God has appointed, and those who resist will incur judgment." Model well as a ministry and as a staff the rules around you and your students will follow. Choose not to model and your students will choose not to follow. Finally, do not ask your students to obey rules that you as a staff will not be following. It is hypocritical and will confuse or even anger your students. If you are asking them to hand sanitize or wear a mask, you should be doing the same.

## **3. Leave room for grace for you and for others.**

This year and particularly this upcoming semester are going to look vastly different than any before. We must give ourselves room for grace. When you have to throw 15 audibles in a row you may occasionally drop the ball. Do your best to have a Plan A, a Plan B, and a Plan C beforehand. If it does not go as planned, give yourself grace. Maybe this is the first year that you are not able to have your famous welcome party. Do not judge this year based on previous years, because this year will be different than any of your previous years' events. Plan for these events, pray for these events, and give the results to the Lord. Not having the blowout party that you always have is okay. Maybe this is the year you help your staff and your leaders really buy into gospel appointments; more at <https://gospelappointments.com/>. Everything has had to go back to the drawing board for us, as I am sure it has for you. Let there be grace in that.

Show grace to yourself and to those around you. Some of your surrounding campuses may have different rules. Do not judge them if you see them with more people than you can have. Other ministries may bend the rules a little bit, that does not mean that you should. Continue to have grace with those who agree with you and those who disagree with you. Reflect the light and the love of Christ by showing grace to anyone and everyone.

## **4. Share openly about what works and what does not work.**

Finally, remember to share regularly and transparently with those in similar positions. Everyone is in new territory this fall. You may have an idea that works phenomenally or an event that completely tanks. Please share both. Please share your highs and lows. Ministry should not be a lonely island. You may feel your campus is the only one with a specific rule. Share it. Maybe we can help figure out a way to minister through it together. We need to share to rejoice with one another and to pray for one another this fall.

I am praying for you and your campus and hope you will pray for us! Stay safe and let the Gospel be made known in your life and your ministry through your example in this crisis.