

Five Questions to Discover Opportunities in the Midst of Crisis

Times of crisis and uncertainty usually bring constraints. In the case of COVID-19, there are a many unprecedented constraints. Public gatherings and movement have been restricted. Staff and volunteers may be limited. The ability to physically meet with people is a constraint. Funds may be a constraint. Your list may be unique and long.

At first, constraints can seem very frustrating! They often flow from circumstances beyond our control and it's easy to feel like you are stuck or a helpless victim.

In *A Beautiful Constraint*, Adam Morgan and Mark Barden share story after story demonstrating how constraints can be leveraged to launch people and organizations into amazing breakthroughs. Here are two examples:

- In the 1970s, Southwest Airlines wanted to keep their four routes but had to sell one of their four planes. Four routes with three planes seemed impossible against the constraint of time. However, this constraint sparked creativity and collaboration that introduced several innovations. Southwest dramatically reduced flight turnaround time and went on to break service and profit records.
- In 2006, Audi of America needed to find a way to win the famous 24-hour Le Mans Circuit with the constraint that their car could go no faster than the other cars. Thinking outside the box, they introduced diesel technology and saved so much time from fewer pit stops, that they won the race three years straight.

Surprisingly, these stories demonstrate that constraints can actually be helpful. Creativity, thinking outside the box, reframing problems, innovation, renewed focus and collaboration are all positives that can flow from constraints.

If you are a Christian leader lamenting a constraint, is it be possible your limitation could actually lead to a new insight or approach that might be helpful, beneficial and even...beautiful?

Here are five application questions for you and your team to consider:

1. Could there be a preexisting issue God wants you to address? Sometimes God can use constraints to focus us on priority issues we need to address before we are ready or able to receive more provision.

2. How could you reframe your thinking about your constraint? What would happen if you moved from “we can’t because...” to “what if...” thinking? Identify the question that frames your goal in light of your constraint. Is there opportunity in this constraint?

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3. Whom could you engage or learn from to help you think outside the box of your constraint and circumstances? Who is facing the same problem? How could you collaborate?

4. How can your constraint or weakness be an opportunity for God to demonstrate his sufficiency and for you to depend on him in a deeper way (2 Corinthians 12:9)?

5. How does prayer fit into your constraint? Prayer helps break our self-sufficiency and brings us and our limitations to Jehovah-Jireh, the Lord who provides.

Remember Jesus telling the disciples to throw their fishing net on the other side of the boat after catching no fish all night? John 21:6 says, "When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish." That bursting net is a great reminder that Jesus can see and do things we can't.

Remember Paul locked down in prison? His days as a traveling, church planting and pioneering missionary seemed to be over. Yet as Paul writes in Philippians 1:12-14, "...what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear."

We are in a season where innovation is critical! May the Lord remind you that he is not constrained, and he is still powerfully at work!



About Dr. Steve Brown: Steve is husband to Lea and dad to three teens - Luke, Ainslea and Lauren. Based near Vancouver, BC, Steve develops Jesus-centered leaders as President of Arrow Leadership, an organization focused on developing Jesus-centered leaders. He's the author of "Leading Me - Eight Key Practices for a Christian Leader's Most Important Assignment", "Great Questions for Leading Well" and www.sharpeningleaders.com.

He loves communicating, coaching, and creating resources for leaders. Steve also teaches at Tyndale Seminary's Doctor of Ministry Program.



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