

**Purpose:** To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

## **Chaos Theory: What It Means for You, as a Christian**

Chaos theory has been around for several decades. It has been applied to many branches of science. You may have heard about it as the “butterfly effect.” The theory is: “If a butterfly flaps its wings in Brazil, could it result in a hurricane that hits Texas?”

It may seem far-fetched at first. However, the general idea is that our actions can have much greater impact than we might imagine. For a few minutes, think about chaos theory in light of the Christian movement, your church, and your life as a believer. Think also about this unique moment in history when it seems chaos comes at us from every direction.

### **Why Was Jesus Born Then?**

Start with the question: Why was Jesus born in Bethlehem, Israel? Why not in Rome, the ruling capital of the region? Why not anywhere else? After all, you know, God can do anything.

Of course, you likely know why. Israel, from Old Testament times, is called the Promised Land. God promised this specific area of land to His people. He led them out of Egypt, fed them along the way, and directed them to the land He promised.

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Anyone who knows about the history of God's people recognizes that the temple had to be built in the capital of Israel: Jerusalem. Why not Istanbul or Cairo? God promised Israel to His people. He also promised a Savior. When the wise men showed up to honor the baby King, no Jew was surprised. Of course! The Son of God would show up in Israel.

However, have you ever wondered why Jesus was born *at that precise time*? God, being the ruler of the universe, could have picked any time in history. After all, for Him, a thousand years is like a day, and a day is like a thousand years. God is not bound by a calendar. So, why then?

This becomes an important issue when you think about life in Israel at the time Jesus was born. Consider God's timing from the perspective of a Jew. Every Jew knew that God Himself promised this land to the Jews, but at the time that Jesus arrived, it was overrun by feared and hated Romans. You can't blame the first century Jew for occasionally wondering: "The Romans have taken over. What kind of a promise is that, God?"

The Roman soldiers didn't take over Israel so they could worship the true God. They took Israel—and most of that part of the world—for wealth: taxes. They took it for power—more land. How do you think the Jews felt about paying taxes? Their hard-earned money was sent to a pagan emperor known for orgies; worshipping pagan, false gods; and killing people for sport. It had to be repulsive! It wouldn't be too difficult for a Jew to wonder, "Where is God?" What if *your* land were overtaken by a hated enemy? Wouldn't that be chaos?

## **Chaos**

From a Jew's perspective, the Roman occupation was *chaotic*. Their troops were everywhere, marching through the streets. These soldiers were feared—they invented crucifixion, the most barbaric and painful way to kill anyone. They ruled the people and enforced their laws. Consider a similar situation in your country. Can you feel the chaos?

Chaos theory reflects that seemingly small things can lead to something huge over time. When life gets chaotic, people change. They become open to change. They hunger for hope. Their pain begs for healing. Here is the point: *Disruption breeds spiritual receptivity*.

When parents lose a child, they feel disruption. When a woman loses her job, she feels disruption. When a teenager gets caught with drugs and faces jail time, he feels disruption. Whenever there is disruption, most people are open to something new, something better—a way out, a better life. Imagine the people who met Jesus: those who were healed, those who were fed, those who were caught in the act of adultery, those with leprosy. Consider a whole country, captive to a foreign power. Not just any country, God's country—the Promised Land. In chaotic times, people hunger for help. They are open to change. They become willing to change. They are desperate for a better way.

## **Chaos 2020**

As I write this, hurricanes have recently ravaged the American south; forest fires have burned

in the west; there have been riots and disruption in many cities; political gridlock abounds in Washington; the nation has faced a contentious election—and a pandemic is everywhere around the world, with over a million people dying.

How do you look at this chaotic season of history? How do you see it as a Christ-follower? How does your church deal with it? How do Christians approach this reality? How are unbelievers feeling these days?

Chaos opens human beings to meaningful change. Discomfort makes us consider different options. Trouble, pain, sorrow, loss of loved ones, financial challenges—these disruptions cause people to reflect upon the most important issues of life—the meaning of life.

What happens to a family when a parent dies? Or a child? What occurs when the doctor says you have cancer? What does it feel like when life is clearly out of your control? Why is it that many convicts become Christians while incarcerated?

When life is disrupted, it isn't fun. Major disruption can't be ignored. You can run from the daily newscast, but you can't hide. It means you can't ignore it. And as it drags on and on, you feel worn out, burned out, vulnerable. *In chaos, human beings hunger for hope.* We are desperate for good news.

## **The Gospel: The Report About Jesus**

The word “gospel” means “good news.” Good news about Jesus is great news from God. It is God speaking to the hurts, fears, fatigue, and pain that come with hard times.

## **Your Greatest Moment**

When the pandemic ends—and it will—every believer in Jesus, every church, every denomination, every network of congregations will have a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. After stressful events, there is always a surge of growth in faith—a window of opportunity. There is a potential “revival”—rapid growth of Christianity.

## **10 WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR OUTREACH**

1. Locate the people on your phone directory who are functionally unchurched.
2. Make a written list and pray for them regularly.
3. If you don't know your unique spiritual gifts, take a survey and learn them.
4. If you discover you have the gift of evangelist, focus all of your Christian service on reaching those who are not Christians.
5. If you don't have the spiritual gift of evangelist, serve God in ways that reflect the use of your gifts.
6. If you are not an evangelist, focus on being a “witness.”
7. As a “witness,” you share “what God has done in your life”—your “God stories.”
8. Look for “God moments” when unchurched non-Christians in your social network share a challenge, problem, disappointment, difficulty, or hurt.
9. Think about a somewhat related event in your life.
10. Share how you believe God helped you through that event.

Ask today's grandparents and great-grandparents. After World War II, the troops came home. Churches saw tremendous growth—for about a decade. In time, some of the next generation of young adults fueled the Jesus Movement—likely a long-term aftereffect among some of the children of postwar Christian adults. The Jesus Movement reached many people and shaped a new kind of church, more contemporary, more real. Some of the aftereffects include contemporary Christian music, Christian radio stations, and stadiums packed to hear Billy Graham.

### **Are You Ready?**

Are you—is your church—prepared for this window of opportunity? The real issue is this: Are the Christians in your church equipped to be missionaries to those in their social networks who are hungry for real hope? Are your church leaders preparing people for the ripe harvest that follows every major disruption?

When you add to the pandemic all the stress factors of life in America, it seems God has an exceptional opportunity on the horizon for many churches, for many Christians, for you. Are you ready?

In truth, most are not. Why? Most pastors and church leaders have never been trained in missiology—the biblical teaching of how to reach lost people. The result? They can't train those in their congregations who are "ready."

Our research shows that 10-20% of those in most churches are eager to be trained in mission to unchurched people in their social networks. Does that discourage you? Only 10-20%? It shouldn't! Jesus started with twelve. Every movement—even in your church—starts with those who are "early adopters." They are ready now. The real issue is this: Are church leaders—pastors, staff, and members who lead—willing to help them get training now?

Pray about this. If God is speaking to you, contact Church Doctor and we will refer you to some next step options you can take. Don't wait. The harvest season is close. And it doesn't last forever. Why pray about this? Because Jesus said, "Pray to the Lord of the harvest to send His workers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37).

## **KEY RESOURCES**

The SEND Movement training to become a "missionary" to our unchurched friends, relatives, neighbors, or those at school ([www.thesendmovement.com](http://www.thesendmovement.com)).

Hunter, Kent R. *Restoring Civility: Lessons from the Master*. Corunna, IN: Church Doctor Ministries, 2020.

Hunter, Kent R. and Tracee J. Swank. *Who Broke My Church? 7 Proven Strategies for Renewal and Revival*. New York, NY: Hachette/Faith Words, 2017.

Hunter, Kent R. *Your God Stories: Sharing Faith Made Easy*. Corunna, IN: Church Doctor Ministries, available 2021.

Hunter, Kent R. *Your Spiritual Gifts: Discover God's Plan for Your Life*. Corunna, IN: Church Doctor Ministries, 2018.