



RAPID RESPONSE IN SEASONS OF RECEPTIVITY

By **CAROL DAVIS**

Carol Davis is a mission strategist, equipper, mentor, and mobilizer with more than 60 years of local church, missions and board experience. She has authored several articles, including, "Activating the Invisible Resources."

When a news flash interrupts your feed with the latest catastrophe, it's not just information, it's kingdom "intelligence." Invisible to most, it's God raising His voice for those paying attention. He's pointing to a new front line—waiting for us to follow Him into the fourth-soil chaos.

On Christmas night in 2004, my young grandson Mike and I were on the way to our family Christmas celebration. Suddenly, the radio interrupted the Christmas music with news of the tsunami in Banda Aceh with potentially tens of thousands dead. I blurted out: "Something just shifted in the heavenlies," to which Mike responded—"Huh?" Prayer for that region of the world had been intense—prayer that God would break down the spiritual resistance. God was answering our prayers for open hearts and access.

Compassion and aid flowed quickly from every corner of the earth, and rebuilding lasted for years. Questions linger as to how prepared Christ's Church was to capture that season for more than the crisis-relief phase.

Since then, Lebanon has experienced a devastating explosion, Myanmar has seen ethnic cleansing, and the COVID-19 pandemic has killed millions. Ukraine

has been invaded, an earthquake has destroyed Turkish towns, and tomorrow will bring a fresh calamity of some sort.

As we track human tragedies, most can be overlaid with a map showing where prayer and/or years of sowing have been focused on peoples in need of the Gospel. Unaware, they still wait in darkness for the Light.

RECEPTIVITY

When normal life for people and places has been suddenly and brutally disrupted, a high density of new receptivity usually arises—for a short season. Any event that forever alters a person's future leaves them in immediate shock: traumatized, in a state of disequilibrium, and often short of personal agency to bring stability to the coming days, weeks, months, and sometimes, years. In the new season, victims face fresh vulnerabilities to hunger, weather, abuse, violence, corruption, and/or injustice. While they process their forever-loss of friends and family, jobs, homes, and way of life, they often are severed from their physical and emotional anchors, and they experience aloneness like never before.

For some, their religious belief systems are shattered, and they find formerly rock-solid answers insufficient for the new questions and circumstances. They become open to re-processing their life, its meaning, and their future.

SEASONS

Seasons of receptivity do not last long. They can come for a few moments or last a few months, until something or someone fills the vacuum. This is especially true regarding the limited window of receptivity at the heart level. In this state of disequilibrium, sufferers feel driven to find answers and stability as quickly as possible. It is both a brain and a heart issue. Humans need cognitive closure to the new questions and their heart aches for a return to peace. They become receptive, not just to the Gospel but to anything or anyone that will quickly fill the void. For cognitive closure, wrong answers can be tolerated better than the vacuum they experience.

We know that the best filler of that vacuum is the Lord, who longs to be with them in their suffering and speak to their pain. At a gathering in Lebanon during the Syrian crisis in 2018, Miriam Adeney helped answer the question: “Where is God in the Crisis? Making Sense of Crisis and Suffering.” Among other things, she reminded us that:

- a) Humans are more than sinners; we are created in the image of God. We are never just sinners or even victims. In God’s image we are gifted, resilient, and creative.
- b) God enters our/their pain. A wounded God can speak to our/their pain.

RAPID RESPONSE WITH SENSITIVE HEARTS

That is why we must quickly be about our Father’s business. From a kingdom perspective, it seems to make sense that the crisis and disruption of others would challenge us to consider disrupting our own lives as we follow our Savior. The good Samaritan comes to mind. In urgent seasons, we need to be open to adjust our budget and calendar—even our policies and processes—in light of the sudden arrival of short-lived, high-density receptivity that we’ve prayed

for. There is no time for business as usual when the harvest is fully ripe.

When the epicenter of the Arab Spring demonstrations landed in Syria, it displaced more than half her citizens, both internally and to many nations in Europe. In the midst of that turmoil, many ordinary European believers responded quickly and powerfully to the flood of refugees. They rearranged their lives to rapidly respond, bringing practical aid, healing, hope, and the Gospel. We now know of movements to Christ among some of those who fled war and tyranny in that season.

Katy was one of the go-ers. She had no special mission credentials—but she had her church behind her, and she had ears to listen and a story to tell. One afternoon, Katy glanced at something—a someone. The glance became a gaze because something was not right. Under a shady tree on a green hillside, in an almost deserted park, on a hot summer afternoon in Frankfurt, Germany, sat a distraught woman, all alone. She was across the street from a refugee intake center where new refugees were processed. Katy felt prompted to talk with this obviously displaced woman, even though she felt terrified, not knowing what to say. What she heard coming out of her mouth in English was, “I want to hear your story.”

It didn’t take long before the two pain-filled eyes met a stranger’s two eyes—and sensed compassion. Nadira was a recent arrival. She had started running the night ISIS fighters broke into the apartment where she lived with her brother, demanding money they didn’t have. Angry, they beheaded her brother in front of her. Soon they pulled her newborn twins from her arms and threw them out the window to their death below. “I started running, because that’s all I had had—my brother and my babies.”

Katy and Nadira wept together. Slowly, Katy was able to share that just months before, she also had lost a child, though not as tragically. In her case, it was a miscarriage that led to the most painful experience of her life. She shared a story of where and how she had found hope to move forward with Jesus. As Katy shared, Nadira sobbed. Katy asked if she could give her a hug. Nadira immediately grabbed her and

held her—long and tight. Katy says she will never, as long as she lives, forget that hug.

The two strangers shared their human condition, including indescribable pain and increased hope. Because of the pain, although in differing degrees, each had something to give as well as receive. A glance. A gaze. A step. A story. A connection. A hug. A knowing. And HOPE!



POSITIONING FOR ACTION

Might we adopt the athletic, army, and agricultural model of 2 Timothy 2:4-6? Those holding each of these jobs prepare themselves long before the game, the battle, or the harvest. Then, at the right time, they rapidly deploy to the stadium, the front lines, and the ripe fields.

In human crises, early response usually includes medical and trauma healers; specialists in search, rescue, and logistics; compassionate listeners; and connectors. Christians also add intercessors, evangelists, and those apostolically gifted. Many agencies specialize, but Church communities around the world constitute a large latent workforce with the specialties needed, just waiting for activation into the chaos. And any believer

going in the power and authority of Christ our Lord can be used. To get ready, here's what I recommend:

1. Position now for the fourth-soil seasons—at home and abroad.
 - Activate prayer teams to intercede, prophetic seers to spot, early on, God's openings, and mobilizers to mobilize other mobilizers throughout your church community.
 - Identify all possible assets—visible and invisible.
 - ◊ Visible are the specialists already equipped, funds already designated, current partners and language capability you know about, etc.
 - ◊ Invisible are the resources you will need to discover among your people and within their connections. Go find the hidden treasure. Look for distinctive life experiences and unique connections. Encourage additional equipping opportunities in skills like trauma healing, search and rescue, crisis logistics, intercession, setting up refugee resettlement centers, meal stations, children's programs, appropriate cultural engagement, cross-cultural listening skills, and peace-making (often needing application within the team itself in the midst of battle).
2. Run interference when necessary. Make sure your systems and processes do not unnecessarily block your kingdom-advancer types from running quickly to the fourth-soil places and spaces.
3. When the news flashes come:
 - Listen for the "kingdom intelligence" behind the details. Ask the Lord what He has in mind and explore the kingdom possibilities now that could not have been conceived of a few hours ago.
 - Then, respond with the speed worthy of our King, who at that very moment will be opening hearts in the chaos to be with Him forever. 