Finding Certainty in Uncertain Times

Little did I know that this TRIP of a lifetime would include a RIDE of a lifetime!

Several years ago, Pattie and I had the incredible privilege to lead a tour to Israel, Jordan, and Italy. On day eight of our two-week adventure, our busload of 40 set out to explore the rose-red city of Petra, a phenomenon tucked away in a valley running from the Dead Sea to the Gulf of Aqaba. As you may know, this is a place where nature and man have conspired together to create a civilization carved out of sandstone that stands unmatched in the architectural annals of human history. In other words, Petra is a destination that simply sits in the category of you've-got-to-see-it-to-believe-it. It's a place where photos only offer a tease of its magnificence.

As you enter the city through a narrow and winding gorge, the Siq, you are flanked by soaring cliffs that reach high into the Jordanian skies. At the end the gorge, you are stunned and breathless as you catch your first glimpse of Al-Khazneh—The Treasury. Any attempt to adequately describe this wonder of the world falls short.

After we had soaked in this city sculpted into the giant red mountains (and shot a ton of photos), we had the option of a horseback ride back to the bus. And in spite of the slapdash 'saddles', and perhaps more importantly in spite of better judgment, a few of us mounted up for the ride.

Long story short, somewhere along the way back things went south—in a hurry. I was snapping some photos of my fellow horsemen when all of the sudden my horse got spooked (for us non-equestrian types that's a technical term for 'went crazy'!) and took off in full gallop. For the next several minutes, I had no idea how this ride was going to end. In those harried moments, two things crossed my mind. First, this was NOT in the travel brochure! And second, falling off the horse was NOT a good option! So I hung on for dear life. To this day I still don't know why or how the agitated horse eventually decided to stop.

My 'ride of a lifetime' is a fitting picture of the reality of leadership. There are simply times when things are UNCERTAIN—when you have no idea how things will turn out. And when those times come, 'hanging on' is sometimes the best you can do.

So let's probe this a little. In times of uncertainty, as a leader, what DO you hang on to? Allow me to flag a few thoughts I cling to.

- **God is always at work.** In moments when you cannot "see" Him at work, in an act of faith, you choose to believe that He IS at work—unseen, but on duty. You step aside from the fray to review the record Book of His faithfulness over the years, rehearsing all the ways He has walked with you and shown up for you.

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• **Seek wisdom.** The more uncertain the times the greater the need to provide yourself with the surround-sound of those who can speak insight, truth, and hope into your situation. Finding your seat at the table with a few hand-picked, wise souls will serve as the security check against making decisions that are shortsighted or insufficiently conceived.

• **Call out.** During times of uncertainty, I find myself heading to my most treasured place of solitude—the foothills of the San Gabriel Mountains. As I call out my prayers to God against the backdrop and grandeur of this setting, I am reminded of how big my God is and how proportionately small my challenges are. Life and leadership are right-sized.

• **Keep alert.** When faced with the unknowns of leadership, I find that I need to stay alert to multiple storylines. While God is working out His master plan in the macro, He is also at work in the micro. He uses uncertainties as part of His schoolhouse to shape a leader. You will learn things about God (and yourself) that simply aren't available when times are steady—things that then become part of your storyline of faith that God will leverage in your circles of influence for years to come.

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When it is all said and done, it is the leader who chooses to meet the times of uncertainty with the truths of certainty that will stand.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life