

## WHAT PEOPLE ARE SAYING ABOUT SAM CHAND...

Sam Chand has dedicated his life to champion the success of others. Known as a “dream releaser,” Sam is a leader of leaders who will constantly challenge and lift our mindsets, self-imposed limitations, and unexamined choices. Sam writes from the enormous wealth of his own experience with uncanny insight, good humor, and pragmatic advice.

—*Brian Houston*  
Global Senior Pastor, Hillsong Church

Sam Chand’s teaching is a secret weapon resulting in the increase of effective materialization of your unrealized potential.

—*Bishop T. D. Jakes*  
*New York Times* Best-Selling Author

Sam Chand has been one of the most valuable mentors in my life and ministry. He has tremendous character, valuable leadership insight, a contagious sense of humor, and a pastor’s heart. He has mentored me and made me a much stronger spiritual leader.

—*Craig Groeschel*  
Senior Pastor, Life.Church

Samuel Chand is a leader's leader. His keen insights and vast leadership exposure have prepared him well for resourcing the kingdom. His natural passion for leadership development is a refined gift he enthusiastically shares with leaders and developing leaders.

—*John C. Maxwell*  
Founder, EQUIP  
*New York Times* Best-Selling Author

No one does this better than Sam Chand and I can say that from our experience working with him in my own church. His reputation for helping companies find their way in the twenty-first century is exemplary and his integrity is beyond reproach.

—*Jentezen Franklin*  
Senior Pastor, Free Chapel  
*New York Times* Best-Selling Author

Great leaders have mastered the art of asking great questions, but legendary leaders like Sam Chand have mastered the art of questioning their own thinking.

—*Steven Furtick*  
Founder and Lead Pastor, Elevation Church

Change is on the horizon, but it will not come by accident—it will require intentionality by those who lead the way! As a voice of influence on the subject of leadership, my friend Sam Chand will help you shape your future by reshaping the way you think!

—*John Bevere*  
Best-Selling Author and Minister  
Cofounder, Messenger International

One of the most respected voices on church and ministry leadership today is Sam Chand. On his website, his tag line is, “My life’s vision is helping others succeed”—and he’s good at it. Sam and I have shared a number of clients over the years, and time and time again, I’ve seen him turn around struggling churches, inspire frustrated leaders, and transform the culture at failing organizations.

—*Phil Cooke*  
Media Producer and Consultant  
Author, *The Way Back*

Just when I thought my friend Sam Chand had reached his pinnacle, he transcends to a new dimension. Sam has a masterful skill of asking piercing questions, which are better questions that lead to better answers and ultimately a better life!

—*Bishop Dale C. Bronner*  
Author/Founder, Word of Faith Family Worship Cathedral

Sam Chand will expand your thinking, give you fresh tools,  
and help you navigate your leadership journey.

—*Mark Batterson*

Lead Pastor, National Community Church

# CHANGE HAS CHANGED

TIME FOR A STRATEGIC RESET

SAM CHAND

  
WHITAKER  
HOUSE

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## **CHANGE HAS CHANGED** **Time for a Strategic Reset**

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## NEVER THE SAME AGAIN

We are all navigating this new normal together. As we lock arms virtually and try to help one another in the ways we can, our vast world suddenly feels a little smaller and a lot more connected.

And for that, we are grateful.

—Michael Dell, CEO of Dell

**E**veryone is tired. Everyone is confused. Everyone is stressed. Since the spring of 2020, leaders in every organization and at every level have suffered from enormous stress. It's a fact that we minimize at our peril.

After several months of lockdowns, openings, more lockdowns, reopenings, and countless (often conflicting and

confusing) updates about the virus, masks, and the promise of vaccines, I held a video conference with eighty-seven leaders of the largest churches in Europe. They were from all parts of the European Union. I assumed that their experience was similar to what I'd heard from leaders in the United States and around the world. Just a few minutes into our call, I said, "I know your heart is heavy, your brain is fried, you're exhausted, and you're frazzled by all the new and rapidly changing challenges during the pandemic."

Instantly, all of the heads in the little boxes on my computer screen nodded. In the environment of the call, I had given them permission to be honest about their mental stress and their physical exhaustion. They hadn't felt they could take off their mask of invincibility around the people on their teams, but they felt safe with me and each other.

As we talked, they had another insight: if they were that stressed and tired, the people on their teams felt even worse. As the primary leaders of their organizations, they had options. They could, at least to some degree, protect their bandwidth by saying "no" to some demands and requests, but the people on their teams had far less flexibility. They were under the gun to respond to the leader's immediate decisions about media, information technology, facilities, and programming—and for those who work in the business world, sales, production, research and development, and online marketing. On top of that, these team members were expected to get results even as

the situation changed from day to day...and sometimes from hour to hour.

If the leader's stress level was at seven, the people on the team were at nine. The eighty-seven leaders on our call suddenly understood why everyone—people on their teams, their spouses and kids, and themselves—had hair-trigger reactions to seemingly insignificant events and walked around with a toxic mixture of anxiety, sadness, and resentment because things were changing so much and so fast all around them. After the call, a leader from Germany sent me this text:

Thank you, Sam, for your exact and clear analysis of our current emotional situation. I felt so understood. And thank you even more for your helpful perspective. Actually, we're already doing a lot of what you recommend, but your input made it much clearer. I hope to see you soon in person, maybe one day in Germany! Many blessings.

Over and over again, I've heard leaders in business, the church, and nonprofits tell me, "Sam, I can't wait until all this is over and we can return to normal."

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**TOO MUCH HAS CHANGED FOR US TO GO BACK TO  
THE WAY THINGS USED TO BE.  
IN FACT, THE VERY NATURE OF CHANGE HAS CHANGED!**

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I completely understand this sentiment, but I gently and clearly inform them, “Yes, that would be wonderful, but I’m afraid it’s not going to happen. Too much has changed for us to go back to the way things used to be. In fact, the very nature of change has changed! We’ll be living with it from now on.”

## CLIMATE CHANGE

No, I’m not referring to fossil fuels, Western wildfires, hurricanes, and rising sea levels. I’m talking about our socio-logical ecosystem, which is experiencing far more stress in far less time than our climate. The first step in responding to a period of rapid change is to take a hard look at the change factors:

- ✦ We’re experiencing the worst health crisis since the Spanish flu pandemic of 1918-1919.

In an article in *TIME* magazine, Laura Spinney compares the two health emergencies:

As the world grapples with a global health emergency that is COVID-19, many are drawing parallels with a pandemic of another infectious disease – influenza – that took the world by storm just over 100 years ago. We should hope against hope that this one isn’t as bad, but the 1918 flu had momentous long-term consequences – not least for the way countries deliver healthcare.<sup>1</sup>

- ✦ We're experiencing the biggest financial crisis since the Great Depression in the 1930s.

As the shutdowns took effect in the spring of 2020, many (if not most) businesses had to temporarily close or drastically change the way they do business. Online marketing and sales soared as people couldn't go to stores that were closed or chose to avoid contact in ones that remained open. As the seesaw of closings and openings continued, small businesses suffered. Kevin Kuhlman, the vice president of federal government relations for the National Federation of Independent Business, told *Fortune* magazine, "If the economic trend continues at this rate, one in five business owners anticipate they won't make it." More than 100,000 businesses have permanently closed, devastating the owners, employees, and their families.<sup>2</sup> This staggering number represents 60 percent of businesses that closed temporarily during the pandemic.

- ✦ We're experiencing the greatest social upheaval since the 1960s.

Some readers may not be old enough to remember, but the Sixties saw civil rights marches; violence against the Freedom Riders who rode buses into the South to advocate for Black suffrage; Birmingham police chief Bull Connor turning fierce dogs and water cannons on peaceful protesters; the assassinations of President John F. Kennedy, his brother Robert, and Baptist minister and civil rights leader Martin Luther King Jr.; subsequent riots throughout the country after King's death; police violence at the Democratic National Convention; and

the shooting of four unarmed students by National Guard troops at Kent State University. And all of this took place as the nation was bitterly divided over the unpopular Vietnam War.

In the summer of 2020, a number of cities saw peaceful protests against the killing of Black people turn violent. When governors and mayors appeared to be impotent to quell the violence night after night, many in the country were outraged. Instead of coming together to find justice, both sides hardened in their animosity toward each other. Many churches, especially those that have done a good job of reaching a diverse population, have seen lines drawn in their congregations. Far too often, the lack of empathy they see on the news has been replicated in their relationships with those in the church who have a different ethnicity, background, and socio-economic status.

Every news program is like a daily report about a hostage crisis. The reporters tell terrible news and give dire warnings. It didn't take long for many people to avoid broadcasts entirely, but they still face the continual weight of the problem. We all are suffering:

- ✦ *Grief* over the loss of people we love, routines that made us feel comfortable, the feeling of safety, and closeness to our friends and family.
- ✦ *Resentment* because those we've trusted have failed to protect us, failed to provide for us, and don't seem to have answers to the most pressing questions.

- ✦ *Anxiety* because uncertainty robs us of a solid foundation of trust and comfort.
- ✦ *Polarization*, which existed before the pandemic, but now divides us on everything from masks and vaccines to election results.
- ✦ *Financial strains*, especially in the lives of owners and employees whose businesses have closed and who have lost their jobs.
- ✦ *Suspicion of leaders* because a knee-jerk effect of stress is to question the intelligence and integrity of those who are making decisions.
- ✦ *Epistemological uncertainty about what is true* because nearly everyone on the Internet claims or appears to be the preeminent expert on every topic—and lashes out furiously if anyone dares to disagree.
- ✦ And we worry about how all of this is affecting *our children*, who miss interactions when schools are closed and absorb the “worry rays” we emit in the atmosphere of our homes.

Of course, the negative impacts of the pandemic don't affect us equally. Few of us endure all of these factors, but virtually all of us suffer from at least a few. Some people have seemingly flourished in this painful season. Investors have made a lot of money, but money can't buy security and love. And those who were on the margins of society, like many in

our churches and who used to shop in our stores, are being hit with a sledgehammer of stress.

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In a sobering personal reflection about life during the pandemic, *National Review* writer Michael Brendan Dougherty realized he and others had resorted to arms-length, clinical language to describe the emotional toll: “We feel we are allowed to speak of the ‘mental-health effects’ of lockdowns, closures, and the fear-driven lack of sociability on ourselves and our children. But when we do, we talk about ourselves like lab animals, as if we were neutral observers of our lives.” But the year wasn’t a total loss. Dougherty absorbed important lessons. “Personally, the last year has fortified my conviction that life cannot be lived via screens, and that the summer — when it comes — should be filled with big get-togethers...and many hot tears over what we’ve lost.”<sup>3</sup>

## **NO QUICK RETURN**

We often think of “the lingering impact of COVID” as a health concern, and indeed it is. Doctors have identified “long

haulers” who continue to suffer adverse effects of the virus months after the initial infection. They also report alarming cases of the virus’s permanent damage to organs, such as the liver, kidney, lungs, and heart.<sup>4</sup> There has also been competing and conflicting information about the safety of the COVID-19 vaccines themselves. But physical effects are only part of the painful legacy of the pandemic. A preliminary report on the impact of social distancing calls this a “double pandemic” and suggests the effects will be with us for a long time:

With the exception of “essential workers,” the pandemic has meant limiting physical proximity to those with whom one lives. For the 28 percent of Americans who live alone, this has meant little to no human contact for months. Regardless of living situation, interactions with anyone outside the home have been severely limited for everyone. Preliminary surveys suggest that within the first month of COVID-19, loneliness increased by 20 to 30 percent, and emotional distress tripled. While several surveys are still ongoing to capture the full extent of the problem, current evidence suggests the pre-existing public health crisis of social isolation and loneliness may be far more widespread than previously estimated....Proximity to others, particularly trusted others, signals safety. When we lack proximity to trusted others our brain and body may respond with a state of heightened alert. This can result in increases in blood pressure, stress hormones,

and inflammatory responses—which if experienced on an ongoing basis can put us at increased risk for a variety of chronic illnesses.<sup>5</sup>

## CHANGE AGENTS

Leaders—the primary executives and all of those who lead throughout our organizations—are *change agents* who anticipate the need to make shifts and bold decisions. They are *change leaders* who help their people take steps forward. The problem, as I've pointed out, is that many of us are exhausted mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually, and those we lead are weighed down by uncertainty, grief, anxiety, polarization, and a nagging suspicion that their leaders (that's us) in every walk of life don't really know what's going on. Virtual meetings have saved businesses and jobs, but the lack of meaningful contact is like getting tiny sips of water every so often in a desert: we're staying alive, but we're still thirsty and unsatisfied. More than ever, our organizations and our people need us to give them three essential ingredients: clear direction, empathy, and a sense of hope. Without them, the effects of pandemic-induced stress will continue to erode vision, joy, and creativity. But with them, people can learn and grow from this difficult and extended season of uncertainty.

It's easy to feel overwhelmed by the avalanche of news, which is mostly bad news and warnings that *things will get even worse!* If we're not careful, we'll either become reactive without thinking—which causes our people to doubt our wisdom—or

we'll become passive and sullen, which invites them to look somewhere else for direction. Even after we achieve herd immunity and businesses and churches reopen, the damage of the past year or so will stay with us. In the continuing uncertainty, leaders need to ask five crucial questions:

1. What should we *start*?

For some, it's inconceivable to make plans to start something new as they cope with tragedy and loss, but great leaders know that down times (in the market and the community) offer incredible opportunities to those who are wise and nimble.

2. What should we *stop*?

We realize that at least some of the meetings, programs, and events we planned in "normal" times don't fit any longer. We'll be wasting our time and resources if we insist on continuing them.

3. What should we *suspend* until later?

Some activities will be appropriate later, but not now. We need to triage our plans to focus on those that will make the biggest difference in the short term.

4. What needs to be *sustained* at all costs?

Organizational values cannot be sacrificed in any way. The *what*, *how*, and *when* may change, but the *purpose* and *values* remain the organization's guiding light.

5. What will accelerate our *speed* of growth?

In a sustained crisis, people in the community and potential customers are looking for organizations that can adapt to the changing environment, speak to their emotional needs as well as their physical needs, and offer services and products they desperately want. The churches and businesses that see these opportunities will grow...and the others will falter and perhaps die.

These are important questions when things are going well; they're crucial when we face times of uncertainty, strain, and doubt.

## **FLEXIBLE...AND QUICK**

It's almost comical: every pastor I've talked with since the pandemic began has told me they'd had long-term plans to utilize their online platforms, but they were forced to implement them within days when a lockdown was announced. Suddenly, planning and implementation were compressed into a flash!

A crisis brings out the worst or the best in people—and sometimes the worst and the best in the same person! Some

crater under the strain, but others become more creative, more affirming of those who contribute, more patient with those who are struggling, and more willing to take bold risks. Leaders who adjust their plans to support their employees earn enormous reservoirs of trust and respect. For instance, when a fast-food chain had to close with no foreseeable date to open again, management avoided layoffs by partnering with a health and wellness company that needed help with a spike in online orders.

In a crisis, careful, detailed, vetted planning is no longer an option. The risk isn't making a *bad* decision; it's making *no* decision. An article in *McKinsey Quarterly* observes that organizations that remain too bureaucratic, slow, and focused on profits more than people are falling behind. It explains:

Inertia is clearly riskier than action right now, so companies are mobilizing to address the immediate threat in ways they may have struggled to when taking on more abstract challenges, such as digital technology, automation, and artificial intelligence (all of which still loom). Bold experiments and new ways of working are now everyone's business. Will the new mindsets become behaviors that stick? We don't know. Did it take a pandemic for organizations to focus on change that matters? Too soon to say. Still, as one leader we spoke with puts it, "How can we ever tell ourselves again that we can't be faster? We have proved that we can. We're not going back."<sup>6</sup>

In times like these, any factors that have masked the true nature of management are stripped away, and the true organizational identity is revealed. Pastors and business leaders have a golden opportunity to show that their values are more than lip service about integrity, compassion, and unity. Character is taken for granted or overlooked in the good times, but it's plainly evident when the chips are down and people are struggling. People look into their leader's eyes and listen for the tone of voice that says, "We'll get through this, and we'll do it together. You can count on me, and we can count on each other."

In times of uncertainty, minds wander, vision wanes, and action diminishes—unless leaders encourage their people to do something that makes a difference every day. It may not be huge, but showing compassion and taking definitive action to help someone gives employees a sense that they're having an impact—because they are.

A word that I've heard again and again in the pandemic is *pivot*. The organization was going in a certain direction, but the crisis forced the leaders to change course and to change on the spur of the moment. A company that owns and manages a chain of theaters suddenly went from showing blockbusters to locking their doors. But the CEO didn't give up. In two days, management retrained 1,000 employees to work in the burgeoning retail grocery business. Do you think the theater employees feel valued by their leaders? I'm sure their loyalty has never been higher.

The bureaucracies and systems that worked well enough in normal times must be adapted for extraordinary seasons. Large meetings with lots of research and slow decision-making doesn't work in crises. Companies and churches are forming smaller teams and giving them more authority to act. Will they make some decisions they regret? Of course, but they'll show their constituents they're actively involved in meeting needs. And some segments of the organization that were ancillary before the pandemic, such as IT, are now vitally important to enable leaders to connect with members and customers. In other words, the organizational chart is being completely revamped. (More on that later.)

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**AS ORGANIZATIONS BECOME MORE FLEXIBLE AND ADAPT MORE QUICKLY, LEADERS WILL BE ABLE TO IDENTIFY THEIR OUTSTANDING TEAM MEMBERS, THE ONES WHO RISE TO THE CHALLENGE WITH A BLEND OF CREATIVITY, TALENT, OPTIMISM, AND TENACITY.**

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As organizations become more flexible and adapt more quickly, leaders will be able to identify their outstanding team members, the ones who rise to the challenge with a blend of creativity, talent, optimism, and tenacity. These are the people who lead the way into the future, the ones who capture the moment and turn chaos into opportunities. A McKinsey &

Company regular article entitled “The Shortlist” advises leaders to become flexible and quick. The risk, the author asserts, is that when the worst of the crisis is past, leaders will be tempted to go back to “business as usual.”

Now, as the world feels its way toward recovery, the risk is that inertia will set in, along with a longing for a return to the operating style of earlier days. In our conversations with CEOs, we are struck by stories of how some young middle managers are defying the problems and frustrations of this difficult period. Only by advancing new cadres of adaptive, resilient leaders, as well as a middle bench fluent in technology that cuts across silos, will companies be able to work with the speed and impact necessary. Time for some battlefield promotions.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed. Battlefield promotions are given because people exhibit courage, skill, and exemplary leadership in the heat of the moment—exactly the qualities leaders are looking for in their people right now.

## **MY PROMISE**

My friends who live along the Gulf and Atlantic coasts have lived through more than their fair share of hurricanes, and they tell me there’s something they dread more than the howling winds and pounding rain, which always seem to hit at

night. They're more bothered by the long cleanup operations to put their homes, businesses, and communities back together.

The pandemic is the hurricane, and we've only just begun the prolonged season of cleanup. When we're done, however, our organizations can be stronger than ever, and we can be better leaders than we've ever been.

As you dive into this book, I'm making three promises:

1. First, you'll find plenty of understanding and compassion. I understand how you feel, and I empathize with the challenges you face.
2. I'll provide plenty of insights about the complexity of your situation.
3. I'll offer principles and practices you can apply—right now, today—to make you a better leader at this time when everybody needs you more than ever.

The old assumptions about decision-making, personnel, and processes no longer apply. This book will give you concepts that fit with the reality of our dynamically changing world.

*(Author's note: I'm making a very large assumption that by the time this book is released, the worst of the pandemic will be over. As you'll see in these chapters, I believe the effects will be with us for a long time.)*

## TAKEAWAYS

- ✦ During and in the aftermath of the pandemic, leaders are fried—emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually.
- ✦ To lead effectively, we need to ask (and answer) five crucial questions:
  - » What should we *start*?
  - » What should we *stop*?
  - » What should we *suspend* until later?
  - » What should we *sustain* at all costs?
  - » What will accelerate our *speed* of growth?
- ✦ Speed, flexibility, boldness, and encouragement are more important than ever because the way we process change has radically changed.

At the end of each chapter, you'll find some questions to stimulate further reflection and provide opportunities for rich discussions with your team. Don't hurry through these. They're not timed tests! Carefully consider how you can adapt so you're flexible and quick.

## THINK ABOUT IT

1. How would you describe the personal, family, and organizational stresses you've felt since the pandemic began?

2. How has stress affected your relationship with your team and your constituents (your leadership team and church members or business customers)?
3. On a scale of zero (not at all) to ten (all day, every day), how well have you adapted your leadership to be flexible and quick? Explain your answer.
4. What do you hope to get out of this book?