A Pastor's Time Management: Accessibility vs. Personal Boundaries

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DECEMBER 13, 2018
Being appointed a spiritual leader, undershepherd, and herald of the good news of the Son of God is an awesome commission from God. Witnessing that God impelled me to accept such a role requires daring. The burden of making this assignment manifest rests on my shoulders for life. While outwardly church bodies may grant me the authority to function in such a position, the ultimate authority is an inner one – a tacit, ineffable assurance that lodges deep in my soul, unseen, like gravity or like the power of the genetic code that holds life’s deepest secrets. (Dr. Samuel D. Proctor, We Have This Ministry)
“We as pastors should avoid taking ourselves too seriously. It is essential that we develop a sense of humor about ourselves. We all wear masks, and we make pretentions to ourselves, as well as to others, about ourselves. This is a dangerous thing. Some of this, of course, is necessary because we could hardly bear to look at who we really are. But to some extent, we ought to try to see ourselves as we are and as we are not. Such honesty will relieve a great deal of anxiety.”

(Dr. Gardner C. Taylor, We Have This Ministry)
“Conduct yourselves wisely toward outsiders, making the most of the time.” Colossians 4:5

“Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, 16 making the most of the time, because the days are evil.” Ephesian 5:15-16
“Some of us ‘overpastor’ our churches...we are on hand too much.”* (Dr. Sandy F. Ray)

- A good pastor must balance the roles of shepherd and manager
- Be close enough to know what is going on, but no need to know everything.

*Dr. Taylor carefully noted that many of us ‘underpastor’ our churches.
Time management is a critical skill to keep the rest of our duties in perspective and in their proper place.

A lack of time management skill skews the line that separates our shepherding from our managing.

...this leads to a blurring of the boundaries between our calling and our personal lives.
The pastor should avoid at all times being drawn into personal conflict with members

- Must be able to achieve personal distance from whatever issue comes up

- Considering each in terms of its own merits and deficits
Finding a healthy balance does not necessarily mean 50/50

- It’s what works best in your life and in your ministry
- Critical skills in time management are a must
- We can waste a lot of time “riding off in all directions at the same time.” (Hal Luccock, Yale Divinity)
A Pastor's Time:
Accessibility vs. Personal Boundaries
Two (2) Baseline Rules

Rule #1:

1) Boundaries Are Biblical
And the Lord God commanded the man, “You may freely eat of every tree of the garden; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall die.”

- Someone just shows up at the office to talk. Sometimes it is a crisis, but most of the time it is loneliness.
Rule # 2

2) Never forget: Our *first* ministry is at home
a. As ministers of God, we need to be attentive to others, be listeners, and be encouragers.
   - However, we also are not to neglect our own web of relationships and family.

b. We cannot trade the fracture of the family for poor management of God’s people…thinking we are doing it for ‘ministry.’

c. Poor ministry and misguided self-management will fracture your family and your ministry.
Developing limits with your time and church relations will not happen overnight.

- You have trained your church and yourself in a deeply entrenched pattern.

…REFORM NOW!
How do you get there..?
Your time management is like forgiveness…
it begins and ends with YOU!
10 Questions to ask yourself
1. Do you spend adequate time with your family?
   - Do you have a regular date night with your spouse and a separate family night with the kids at least once a week?
2. Do you have a ministry that trains and equips others, or do you run the show?
3. Do you try to be too much to too many?
   - Or, do you not only train others but also delegate?
4. Do you have unrealistic expectations for yourself as well as for others?
- We need to have vision and passion, but also be temperant, and allow God's timing.
5. Do you say "No," (with love and tact) and allow others to do ministry?

- Ephesians 4:12

  “to equip the saints for the work of ministry”
6. Do you have a system of time management?
- Even Jesus took time off!
Matthew 17 – Mount of Transfiguration
7. Do you take regular time off?
   - Pastors need at least two days off a week and four weeks off each year!
8. Do you take care of yourself physically, by eating correctly and exercising?
   - Remember, your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit…*don’t defile it!*
9. Do you have a good system to calendar and keep track of events and dates?
10. Most important: Do you spend adequate time with our Lord?
   - How much time do you give God each day?
Boundaries are not a fence to keep others out…

Boundaries are essential to keep good relations.
Don’t focus on the symptoms…

**TIME MANAGEMENT** is the virus!
Tools for Times Management

1) Set realistic goals
2) Prioritize
   - Too many “good ideas” is a bad thing
   - 80/20
     “Things which matter most should never be at the mercy of things that matter least.”
     (Johann Wolfgang von Goethe)
3) Self-Awareness
   - After-action review
4) Focus

- Lack of *direction*, NOT lack of time, is the biggest problem most of us have
- Focus is made up of two time-management skillsets:
  1. The ability to quickly identify the task that you can get done
  2. The ability to block everything else out while you get it done!
6) Decision-making
- Preparation and prioritization will help you make better decisions
7) Planning
   - Your schedule doesn’t really belong to you… emergencies/distractions/other people’s schedules
   - If not thought through properly it leads to delays and missed opportunities
8) Delegate! Delegate! Delegate!

a. Hand off work with clear instructions
b. Give the job to the *RIGHT* person
c. Check in with them! ...make sure it's on track
d. There is a HUGE difference between knowing that something must get done and being the one who has to get it done.
9) Develop Effecting Coping Skills
- If obstacles stop you you will never get anything done!
- There is a difference between stress and pressure
- Review the situation, Identify what we wrong and what needs to happen, then implement corrective action


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Thank you!

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