

Church Effectiveness Nuggets: Volume 10

How to Improve Your Time-Management Skills

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Purpose of this Volume: Provides in-depth answers to questions that readers of *The Parish Paper* ask regarding principles and procedures that help clergy and church staff to achieve maximum ministry impact with the non-renewable resource of time.

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I. Time Pressure Goes with Clergy Territory

For most ministers, time management is simultaneously their greatest need and their unfixable challenge. They agree with management guru Peter Drucker's observation that "time is the scarcest resource and unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed." Yet most clergy identify time as something over which they have little control.

How can you manage time in a profession where unexpected interruptions often provide your best opportunities for ministry? How can you manage time when two funerals appear in the middle of Bible School week? What can you do when an unexpected marriage-counseling crisis appears during your only available time to prepare Sunday night's Bible study? As one pastor said at the end of a stressful week, "I try to take one day at a time, but sometimes several days attack me at once."

II. Test Your Time-Management Skills

This five-minute inventory helps you identify patterns that influence effectiveness in your ministry role. Check the questions to which you presently can answer yes.

1. Have you written out your long-term personal and professional goals?
2. Have you put specific plans on paper for how you intend to achieve your personal and professional goals?
3. Do you update at least annually, in writing, your personal and professional goals?
4. Have you ever done a one-month log on how you use your time?
5. Do you write out "to do" lists for each week?
6. Do you write out "to do" lists for each day?
7. Do you prioritize your "to do" lists in order of the most important to the least important as they relate to your overall goals?
8. Do you usually finish all the items on your "to do" list in appropriate amounts of time?
9. Do you set deadlines on paper for the completing of important projects?
10. Do you usually meet the deadlines on important projects with time to spare?
11. Is the workflow on your desktop neatly organized?
12. Do you put everything in your office back in its place immediately after using it?
13. Do you have a filing system that lets you find things quickly?
14. Do you have some kind of system that keeps you from forgetting important appointments, promises, and responsibilities?
15. Do you regularly use a dictating unit?
16. Do you return your telephone calls promptly?
17. Do you reply to letters promptly?
18. Do you handle your mail only once?
19. Do you concentrate on one task at a time—rather than jumping back and forth among several?
20. Do you make 80 percent of your decisions within the first few minutes after you learn that you must eventually make them?
21. Do you keep telephone time waste at a minimum?
22. Do you keep the number and length of meetings at a minimum?
23. Do you usually arrive on time for work and meetings?
24. Do you focus on fixing the systems that cause certain problems to keep recurring in your work—rather than spending all your time on the problems themselves?
25. Do you use your potentially most productive hours each day for the tasks that require your best abilities?
26. Do you usually deal with interruptions in ways that keep them from destroying your productivity?
27. Do you sometimes say no to requests that do not fit with your personal and professional goals?
28. Do you effectively delegate work and responsibility to other people?
29. Do your subordinates usually cooperate enthusiastically on projects you assign them?

30. Do you make good use of unexpected waiting time for reading books, cassette-tape listening, and study of professional journals?
31. Is your life adequately balanced among the big five—work, hobbies, exercise, family, and socializing?
32. Do you regularly spend time reflecting on how you use your time?
33. Do you relax during non-working hours without worrying about your work?
34. Do you reserve time for spiritual reflection?

III. Methods Are Not Enough: Ten Time-Powering Axioms

Learning the standard time-management methods familiar to the business world is not enough. Firm belief in—or failure to believe in—the ten principles listed below determine whether you are willing to learn and apply well-known time-management methods. Without those ten convictions, learning time-management methods makes little difference. They bounce off your behavior patterns like hailstones off two-inch steel plate.

Axiom #1: God requires you to manage your time. The way we spend our time is the way we spend our life. That makes time management a theological matter, not just a methodological consideration. “Moreover it is required of stewards that they be found trustworthy,” the Apostle Paul wrote (1 Corinthians 4:2). God prizes our stewardship of time at least as much as our stewardship of money. Time does not belong to us but to God. We are only stewards of it. We cannot call back what we have thrown away; nor can we create any that is not yet made. Lost money can be replaced; lost time cannot. Time is our most important non-renewable resource.

“For we are God’s handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to devote ourselves to the good deeds for which God has designed us,” Paul writes (Ephesians 2:10, *New English Bible*). Time-management methods are a means of responding to God’s call to do the particular work for which God designed us. If we do not view time that way, we let circumstances manage our lives.

Axiom #2: Your time-management skill determines your ministry results. In addition to God’s Holy Spirit, church leaders work with five ministry resources: time, people, money, buildings, and equipment. Of those five, time is the hardest to manage, because we cannot see it. Yet, how we use this invisible resource determines the quantity and quality of the other four resources.

We often speak of a need to “save time.” That is not possible. Unlike money, we cannot put time into a savings account. We cannot save time; we can only decide how to spend it. The way we spend it determines (a) the quantity and quality of ministry we accomplish, (b) the quality of our relationships with people, and (c) the sense of meaning and satisfaction in our lives.

Axiom #3: You have all the time you need to do God’s will with your life. How many pastors are younger than thirty-three years of age? Not many. Christ died at an age younger than most contemporary pastors begin their ministries. Yet, some of his final words were, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

Can you imagine a God so unfair that he gives you a job to do, but then refuses to give you the time necessary to do it? When you find yourself constantly running out of time, one or both of two things is happening: you are either doing things that God does not will you to do with your life and gifts, or you are doing God’s will in an inefficient manner. Ordinarily, the answer is fifty-fifty.

Axiom #4: If you do not take charge of your time, other people will. A young man asked church consultant Lyle Schaller, “What secrets have you learned regarding how to be effective in this kind of work?”

Schaller replied, “Don’t let someone else manage your time.”

That sounds like impossible advice. Much of your time-use is automatically mandated. Sixty to 80 percent of your time goes to routine tasks that were probably set in concrete before you arrived on the

scene. However, every ministry role contains an extraordinary amount of discretionary time, perhaps more than any other profession. If you neglect that responsibility, others handle it for you. Your in-box is always full, but every inch of the stack is someone else's priorities.

Axiom #5: You are never powerless over time problems. Everyone experiences stressful periods when all they can do is try to keep afloat in a sea of demands. But over the long haul, each of us can take control of our time and life. To pretend that we cannot is one or both of these two kinds of theological denial: We are either (a) denying the existence of the free will God gave each of us or (b) denying our responsibility for the stewardship of life and gifts God has given us. Usually, the answer is about fifty-fifty.

Axiom #6: Busyness does not equal effectiveness. Many life experiences type into our "emotional software" encouragement that leads us to idolize activity. Schoolteachers and parents tell us to "get busy." The culture says, "The busiest people are more important than relaxed people." Time-worn maxims infer that "The busiest people are the most successful people."

Yet does history label an accomplishment "excellent" *only* because it took a lot of time? Being busy and being effective are vastly different. Good time managers do not confuse activities with results. This is surely what John Wesley meant when he said, "I have no time to be in a hurry." Effective time managers are not rush-oriented; they are results-oriented.

Axiom #7: Long hours do not equal effectiveness. If you serve Christ through a paid staff position, you probably experience a longer workweek than the average citizen. Time studies of pastoral ministers in the early 1960s reported an average workweek of sixty-four hours. Studies in the 1980s and 1990s reported similar results. "The average active priest works more than 60 hours a week, a figure that goes up to 79 hours for a pastor who works alone in a large parish." ("Chicago Priests Overworked, Dedicated," *The Cara Report*, Summer 2000)

Long hours do not, however, make clergy unique among other workers. Three decades ago, the typical executive worked sixty-three hours per week—fifty-three in the office and ten outside. (David Howard, "Executive Workloads—The Triumph of Trivia," *The Wall Street Journal*, August 13, 1968) Recent studies say that pattern has not changed. Similar workweeks prevail among physicians, lawyers, CPAs, and other professionals.

Yet long hours do not automatically equal effectiveness. The proportion of things we get done compared to what we might have done always remains small—even if we stretch our week to ninety hours. Good time management lies in a totally different direction from piling extra hours onto the wagon of our week. Effective time managers select a short list of tasks that fit their goals, passions, ministry gifts, and current ministry role. They then ruthlessly avoid the long list of *worthwhile* tasks that could fill endless hours.

Sorting out the difference between long hours and effectiveness is difficult. Unconscious psychological pressures often pull us in irrational directions. In the following list of reasons why people choose long hours over effectiveness, do any of them diagnose the cause of your long hours?

Some people choose long hours because ...

- They are Type A personalities. Such people live in chronic denial of their human limits. Temperamentally hyperactive, their fuel-injection system is locked on high.
- They subconsciously try to please the parents who made them feel guilty when they were idle.
- They fear not "looking busy" and "in demand."
- They unconsciously try to gain the emotional gratification and praise that comes to people who sacrifice much time and energy on behalf of others.
- They have a martyr complex, driven by deeply embedded fear of appearing inadequate.
- They become addicted to the adrenaline rush of busyness they grew accustomed to in graduate school. They feel uncomfortable outside that pattern.

- They never developed skill in using free time.
- They find work easier to cope with than an unpleasant marriage.
- They sacrifice the quality of their personal and family life on the altar of runaway ambition.

Whatever the root cause of substituting long hours for effectiveness, it perverts our spiritual calling by substituting work for faith. Chronic overload is not so much a sign of authentic Christianity as of faith poverty. Ordering our life as if there is no other way to do God's will except by our work is subtle self-idolatry. The kingdom does not depend totally on us.

Axiom #8: Efficiency does not equal effectiveness. In ancient Greek races, the winner was not the runner who attained the finish line in the shortest time. The winner crossed in the least time with his torch still burning. Efficient people get their work done quickly. Effective people get the right work done. They often leave completely undone some work they could have done efficiently and quickly. Good time managers become efficient in doing the right things at the right time.

Axiom #9: Important work does not equal essential work. All essential work is important, but not all of the important work is essential. Beyond the essentials of spouse, family, and maintaining your spiritual relationship with God, research identifies three essential functions for the senior pastor in every local church:

- Preaching preparation (sermons, worship services) builds your understanding of God and Christian discipleship.
- Caring (hospital calling, funerals, grief calls) builds relationships and helps hurting people.
- Leading (administrative oversight, ministry ideas) involves other disciples in mission and ministries that achieve God's goals and strengthen congregations.

Much of a pastor's other work is important but not essential.

The top priority among those three essentials can change when you move to a different parish. For example, in small congregations with fewer than 100 in average worship attendance, individual pastoral care is the most important of those three essentials. In midsize congregations with 100 to 300 in average worship attendance, administrative coordination of committees and ministry teams is the top-ranking essential. Without that, the other two essentials (preaching and pastoral care) eventually become irrelevant. In large congregations of more than 300 in average worship attendance, excellent preaching is the essential without which pastoral care and administrative leadership become irrelevant.

List the essentials in your ministry setting. What must be done that you and you alone can and must do? Review that list at least annually. Otherwise, the many important items that claw at your door and telephone take charge of your time, leaving no space for the essentials.

Axiom #10: A compass manages time better than a clock. Effective time managers are goal-driven rather than time-driven. Productively managed time helps you reach an essential goal while expending minimum hours journeying to that destination. Most people who become conscious of their need to improve time management begin at the wrong end of this definition. They try to shrink their time expenditures.

To overcome that classic error, scrap the term "time management." Call your efforts "goal management." Good time management begins by deciding what goals we want to reach. Time is merely the highway we use to get there. Until we get clear about our goals, we cannot accurately decide how to reduce time expenditures. If we shoot at nothing, the old bromide says, we usually hit it. However, if we shoot at the wrong target, hitting it does not matter.

Ask and answer three questions:

- What gifts has God given you? (That answer defines the kind of vehicle you use on the journey toward your goal.)
- What does God call you to accomplish with those gifts? (That answer defines your destination.)

- How does God call you to use your time? (That answer defines which highways you take to reach the destination to which God calls you.)

If you ask the third question without the other two, you guide your life with a clock instead of a compass. That prevents you from discarding the many activities you *could* do or other people think you *ought* to do.

People who say, “I’m over-committed,” are sincere but usually deceiving themselves. What they really mean is “I’m under-committed.” They commit themselves in small ways to so many tasks that they cannot commit in large ways to what God calls them to accomplish with their unique gifts. Steven Covey tells a now-famous story about the instructor who was lecturing on time management. He set a wide-mouth jar on the table next to a platter with some fist-sized rocks on it. “How many of these rocks do you think we can get in the jar?” he asked.

After the class offered guesses, the instructor put a rock in the jar, then another, then another, until he filled the jar. Then he asked, “Is the jar full?”

Everyone agreed. It was full. The instructor pulled a bucket of gravel from under the table, dumped some in, and shook the jar. The gravel filled the spaces around the big rocks. The instructor grinned and asked, “Is the jar full?”

“Probably not,” the class said. The instructor reached under the table, brought out a bucket of sand, and started dumping the sand in the jar. It filled the little spaces left by the rocks and the gravel. Once more he said, “Is the jar full?”

“No!” the class roared. With this he started pouring a pitcher of water into the jar. He got something like a quart of water into that jar. When he asked the class for the point of his picture-parable, someone replied, “If we work hard at filling in the gaps in our lives, we accomplish more.”

“No,” the instructor said, “Here is the point: Put the big rocks in first. Otherwise, you’ll never get them in.” (Steven Covey, *First Things First* [New York: Simon & Schuster])

Time management is goal management. When we put the goals in first, the time management is much easier.

Clock management becomes much easier after you develop your compass. Spend five minutes a day for one week writing answers to the following questions:

- What are my lifetime goals? Financial? Career? Physical? Family? Social? Community? Spiritual? Personal?
- What first logical step could I take this week to achieve each of these goals?
- How would I schedule for a “perfect week” five years from now?
- What changes would I have to make in my life to achieve that “perfect week” *next month* instead of five years from now?

Imagine your funeral ten years from now. What would you like people to say about you? What would you like your obituary to say you accomplished? The answer to that question is the compass that defines your destination. Use that compass to manage your time!

Summary: The ten time-powering axioms outlined above provide a time-use guidance system. How those invisible principles play out in your thought patterns and emotional circuits determine whether you learn and use, or derive little benefit from, the time-management methods in the next section.

IV. Proven Time Management Methods: from A to Z

Compare your time-use habits with twenty-six classic methods observed among America’s best time managers. Select ideas that fit your ministry role.

A. Put specific plans on paper for how to achieve your goals. Life goals and the priorities derived from those goals need landing gears as well as wings. Without concrete plans by which to accomplish a priority, nothing happens, in large quantities. Write some step-by-step plans for how to accomplish each priority. The writing process puts your subconscious mind to work generating creativity that thought alone never achieves. Most of the ideas that shape lives, institutions, and congregational destinies are on paper before they are put into practice.

B. Become highly aware of how you use your time. For one month, carry a pocket notebook and record your activity in fifteen-minute segments. That sounds more tedious than it is. Lawyers do it as second nature. You only need do it for a month. Use ten categories for your time log:

- (1) Preaching Preparation
- (2) Teaching and Preparation
- (3) Calling in Hospitals, Homes, Workplaces
- (4) Counseling
- (5) Reading
- (6) Committee and Congregational Meetings
- (7) Community Service and Meetings
- (8) Administrative Leadership and Organizational Matters
- (9) Denominational Responsibilities
- (10) Socializing

A one-month time log accomplishes four things not possible through any other means. (1) You learn who and what causes most of your interruptions. (2) You discover large time-consuming tasks that you should delegate to other people. (3) You identify several unscheduled activities that you should bundle into specific time blocks each week. (4) You identify a reality-base from which you can reorganize your time so it supports your lifetime goals.

Most people subconsciously resist doing a one-month time log. Try it for one day. Then decide whether to do it for a week. You cannot redirect your time until you know the directions in which you presently direct it.

C. Chop out time-wasters that do not fit with your essential goals, priorities, and plans. Analyze everything you presently do through the magnifying glass of your goals, priorities, and plans. What fits? What does not fit? If something does not seem to fit, why you are doing it? What would happen if you did not do it? If the answer is nothing, stop doing it.

Corporate studies indicate that the average worker gets six productive hours out of the eight-hour day. That wastes eighty-eight days a year in productivity. A manager paid \$100,000 annually who loses one hour per day to disorganization costs the company \$12,480. Someone paid \$25,000 annually who wastes one hour per day costs the company \$3,125. People in ministry waste more than money; they waste God's opportunities.

Look at yourself through the eyes of this "Finding Your Potential Time-Wasters" list. Check the items that you think negatively influence your time use.

1. Too many decisions made by uninformed committees
2. Too few committee meetings to make appropriate decisions
3. Staff meetings taking excessive time needed for other work
4. Too few staff planning meetings for adequate coordination
5. Indecision due to lack of information
6. Indecision due to procrastination
7. Too many snap-decisions
8. Unclear written communications
9. Incomplete information on forms and reports
10. Disorganized paperwork
11. Unclear oral communications
12. Lack of performance standards
13. Lack of progress reports
14. Confusion arising from too-frequent procedure changes
15. Failure to manage conflict
16. Lack of coordination and teamwork
17. Failure to delegate work
18. Poor motivational climate

19. Involvement in too many routine details
20. Morale problems caused by understaffing
21. Morale problems caused by overstaffing
22. Poorly trained staff
23. Failure to follow instructions
24. Overlooking poor work of others instead of correcting it
25. Rushing through work that I must correct later
26. Too many drop-in visitors
27. Unnecessary telephone calls
28. Too much socializing
29. Too much daydreaming
30. Family or personal problems
31. Family or personal problems of others
32. Over-control of staff members in ways that stifle their creativity
33. Too many bosses
34. Too much responsibility with insufficient authority
35. Duplication of effort by several persons
36. Failure to say no to unnecessary requests
37. Attempting too many projects at once
38. Unrealistic time estimates for projects
39. Failure to complete projects before starting others
40. Failure to set deadlines
41. Too much crisis management
42. Lack of clear-cut goals
43. Lack of daily action plan
44. Equipment failures
45. Inadequate equipment

List the items you checked on a separate sheet. Rank them in order, the most troublesome at the top. Then ask yourself which items are generated *externally* (by events or other people). Which are generated *internally* (by your own behavior and attitudes)? Look at your three major time wasters. What can you do to reduce or eliminate these?

D. Use zero-based time management. Barnacles are little organisms that grow on the hulls of ships. Barnacle build-up slows a ship's progress through the water. To clean the barnacles off their hulls, ship owners periodically put them into dry dock. Time barnacles grow on the hull of every pastor's ministry. Each year, he or she assumes a few additional roles and responsibilities by putting in place new ideas and ministries. Concurrent subtractions of time-use rarely accompany those additions.

Every summer, put your ministry into dry dock and remove the time-barnacles. This only takes ten minutes of reflection per day, scattered across four or five days.

- List everything you do during a typical month. Use the ten categories in the time-log suggestion above to identify how you spend time.
- The next day, review your list of tasks and ask two questions: (1) With a little training and encouragement, which of these could someone else do? (2) Which of these must you and you alone do?
- At the end of the week, begin taking action to delegate the tasks that someone else could do. Find the people. Invite them to use their gifts in that ministry. Teach them how. Give them the responsibility and the authority.
- Drop completely the tasks that no one needs to do. You took them on because they seemed like a good idea at the time or because they fit your personal inclinations and talents. Delete them.

Repeat this zero-based time management process each summer. You never get to a point where you need not do it again. New barnacles inevitably replace old ones. You never finish re-deciding how to use your time. Scraping off the barnacles once a year recovers your focus on life goals and priorities.

E. Develop greater awareness of your inner-drive patterns. Feelings of powerlessness over time-stress are often the surface manifestation of our psychological makeup. Dealing with these underlying currents empowers your ability to improve time-use habits:

- (1) *High-anxiety people* have difficulty managing their time. The higher the anxiety level, the greater our difficulty in staying focused.
- (2) *Chronic low-grade depression* tends to erode time-management skills. The more depressed people are, the more their concentration falters.
- (3) *Strong relational needs* that accompany gregarious personalities can eat up time. Pastors have responsibilities that they can only accomplish in solitude. One of these is preparing sermons.
- (4) *A high need for recognition* decreases time-management ability. Feeding that demon, such people say yes to more requests than they can accommodate.
- (5) *Age is a factor.* Pastors born after 1945 grew up in a culture that valued leisure above work. They therefore tend to feel mildly guilty and uncomfortable if their lifestyle is short on leisure and long on work. Pastors born before 1946 grew up in a culture that valued work above leisure. They therefore tend to feel mildly guilty and uncomfortable if their lifestyle is short on work and long on leisure. Some pastors born before 1946 become obsessive-compulsive workaholics. Some pastors born after 1945 become obsessive-compulsive “leisure-holics.” Either extreme damages time-management ability.
- (6) *We fail to institute good time management techniques because we resist change.* Most people are more comfortable doing what they know how to do, even when the way they do it is highly stressful. Clergy are not exceptions to that general rule.
- (7) *Our primary psychological-motivator influences how we manage time.* David McClelland, a Harvard psychologist, sees people as motivated by one of three basic needs: achievement, affiliation, or power. (McClelland uses the word power in a morally neutral way.)

Achievement Motivation: *Such persons are less concerned with the rewards of personal success than with obtaining satisfaction from personal accomplishments.* They like to work in positions where they get specific feedback on their efforts. (Some observers feel that fewer clergy operate from this primary drive than from the other two motivations.) Because such men and women like to see new things happen, they generate much change, especially in programs. An organization can tolerate only so much change in a given time span. When the organization needs a period of stability, such staff members feel far less motivated. They must therefore meet their achievement needs in some other way—or move to another congregation or position. Some such individuals compensate by serving in denominational leadership roles, writing books, or leading community organizations. Many such leaders relocate frequently. A different congregation or position provides greater opportunity to make changes.

Power Motivation: *Such persons desire recognition, attention, and the opportunity to exert control over others.* Because “Who is in charge?” is important to them, they may work hard to control communication channels. Revising the organizational structure is another way to feel more in charge. Persons who operate from this internal-drive usually get things under control after occupying a position for several months or years. At that point, they often want to extend their control-influence to other areas. (That behavior is appreciated or not appreciated, depending on the organization’s needs or the emotional-drives of other leaders in the system.) Such leaders will carefully ponder the opportunity to relocate. To a great extent, they make their decisions to move to a different position or congregation on the basis of whether they think they can exercise control there.

Affiliation Motivation: *Such persons desire positive interpersonal relationships, both in groups and individual friendships.* When facing a complex challenge, they are more likely to seek assistance from a friend who is less technically qualified than from an expert with whom they have no prior relationship. This type of leader (the majority of clergy are probably in this category) often does well as a pastor but is not always effective as a program developer or business manager. Affiliation-types like to be with people and feel rewarded as the pastoral relationships deepen. Such persons can contentedly stay in one congregation or position for many years. Despite healthy salary-increase opportunities, they resist relocations. Here, I have all these wonderful relationships, they think. Is that possible elsewhere? How long would it take to build them?

Which of those three motivations seems most influential in your time usage and behavior choices? Did one of them influence your decision to relocate or to stay in the same position? Does identifying your primary motivator help you understand why you feel fulfilled or unfulfilled in your present ministry role or position? (Herb Miller, *Leadership Is The Key* [Nashville: Abingdon Press], pp. 110-111)

F. Concentrate on using your strongest talents rather than on trying to prop up your weak skills. Every pastor must do at least nine different ministry tasks (listed in the monthly time-log suggestion above). Few clergy do more than two or three of them extremely well. Stop feeling guilty about the six things you cannot do well. Delegate as much of each one as possible to someone who has that gift. We are called to be pastors, coaches, and leaders, not superstars who make all the touchdowns ourselves. Paul writes, “And his gifts were that some should be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry . . .” (Ephesians 4:11) Go with the flow of your strengths. Only God is good at everything.

G. Set deadlines on paper for accomplishing major tasks. Disdain for “paperwork” is misdirected irritation. Paper is a valuable ministry tool.

Put on paper (1) goals and (2) intended actions—for today, next week, and next year.

Goals energize our subconscious thinking power. Putting deadlines on paper for accomplishing specific goals enhances our creativity still further. After you decide on a goal, “when it.” Ask yourself when you are going to get this done. If it is a small item, do it right now. If it is a larger, more complex item, write on the paperwork your target date for having it finished. Place it where you will often see it. Creative juices flow best when you work against a deadline. For some people, that is the *only* time creative juices flow.

Putting intended actions on paper has two great values: (1) Paper protects us from making promises we do not keep; thus, developing a reputation as undependable people—or worse, liars. (2) Paper adds to an important project the continuously-visible push for action.

H. Use “to do” lists. When Charles Schwab was president of Bethlehem Steel, he said to Ivy Lee, a consultant, “Show me a way to get more things done with my time, and I’ll pay you any fee within reason.”

Lee handed Schwab a sheet of paper and said, “Write down the most important tasks you have to do tomorrow, and number them in order of importance. Each morning when you get to work, begin at once on number one and stay on it until you have finished. After that, recheck your priorities. If number two should still hold that rank, start on it. If any task takes all day, never mind. Stick with it as long as it remains the most important one. If you do not finish them all, you probably couldn’t do so with any other method, and without some kind of system you would probably not accurately decide which one was most important. Make this a habit every working day. Teach your employees to do the same thing. Try it as long as you like. Then send me a check for what you think it is worth.”

Several weeks later, Lee received a check for \$25,000. Schwab enclosed a note saying this was the most profitable lesson he had ever learned. During the next five years, this plan was largely responsible for helping Bethlehem Steel Corporation become the biggest independent steel producer in the world. It

also helped make Charles Schwab 100 million dollars. (R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap* [New York: McGraw-Hill] p. 38)

Three important kinds of “to do” lists: (1) Three-month goals and priorities list. (2) Daily “things to do” list, made out at the end of each workday for the next day. (3) Weekly “things to do” list, made out each Monday morning (some recommend doing this on Friday).

I. Plan your major time-expenditures in weeks and blocks—not in hours, days, or minutes. A weekly planning sheet containing twenty-one time-blocks is one of the best methods for pastors. Stack three blocks vertically on the left side of the sheet—8:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the morning, 1:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in the afternoon, and 7:00 p.m. to 10:00 p.m. in the evening.

Above the next three-block stack to the right of the first stack, write “Sunday.” Across the page, repeat that three-block stack for Monday and Tuesday, etc.

- Assign three of the twenty-one time blocks to your day off. Do not spread that day off across several days. That kind of time off does not revitalize you as much.
- Assign two or three of the twenty-one evening blocks to leisure and family. This designates a total of at least five of the twenty-one blocks for activities other than work.
- Assign one afternoon and one evening block per week to calling on unchurched persons—evangelism.
- Assign one of the afternoon and one of the evening blocks to pastoral calls on members.
- Leave two other evenings for meetings, worship services, weddings, etc.
- Fit sermon- and teaching-preparation into some of the morning blocks.
- Other duties, such as routine hospital calling, belong in the afternoon slots.

Do not write all the details, such as appointments, on this weekly planning sheet. Use a desk or pocket calendar for that purpose.

Stay flexible. A crisis such as a funeral rearranges the best-laid plans and eats one or more of the twenty-one blocks. But these time-blocks give you a framework within which to operate. The more studiously you try to stick with it, the more fruitfully and pleasantly you live out your week.

J. Concentrate on one task at a time. “Bracketing,” is the skill of focusing on one item at a time. This keeps your mind from jumping from task to task like a fly in a candy shop. What if a stray thought regarding another important task interrupts your concentration? Write it on a piece of paper or on your “to do” list. Return to the task in which you are bracketed.

K. Use the most productive hours of each day for prime projects that require creativity and clear thinking. For many people, these are early-morning hours. For others, it is late-evening hours. Part of your pattern depends on lifelong habits. Part of it depends on self-discipline. Part of it depends on your circadian rhythms (physiological patterns that cause people to peak in energy, thinking ability, and brain function at certain times of the day.)

For some people, blocking time on the clock guarantees the availability of sermon-preparation time. For other people, especially if they are pastors in large churches, a physical location different from their office is also essential. For some pastors, a study at home fills that need. Other pastors often outfit a special room elsewhere in the church for sermon preparation. The secretary screens contacts during those hours by saying, “The pastor is in her time of sermon preparation and prayer. If this is an emergency, I can interrupt her. Otherwise, she can return your call at 11:00 a.m.”

L. Expect interruptions, but do not let every interruption control you. Interruptions are sometimes an irritation and sometimes an opportunity. Sometimes, they are both, and sometimes you cannot judge which they are in the beginning. People who firmly set their life goals and time-use priorities are better able to tell the difference between an essential interruption and important interruption.

In football, you usually try to tackle only the guy who comes through the line carrying the little brown ball. You do not tackle just anybody who comes through the line. Some pastors develop a hierarchy of time-consumers that they allow to interrupt them. They allow items at the top of the list to interrupt items lower on the list, but they refuse to let lower items interrupt higher ones. One pastor's hierarchy of interrupters:

- (1) God (includes study and sermon preparation)
- (2) Prayer Life (do not get so busy at church work that you become a practical atheist)
- (3) Spouse (he or she should feel like the most important person in your life)
- (4) Children
- (5) Staff Members
- (6) Church Leaders
- (7) Church Members
- (8) Non-Church Members
- (9) Denominational Responsibilities
- (10) Community Work

Decide your own personal hierarchy of interrupters. Stick to them *religiously*.

M. Learn how to say no graciously. Anyone who sets life-goals and priorities must say no to some requests. If we say yes to everything, we let other people set our goals and reorganize our priorities. Saying yes to enough important things eventually forces you to say no to something essential. Saying no is not laziness or insensitivity. Saying no is a mechanism for preserving our vitality for life-goals and priorities.

Because clergy have answered the call to a profession in which they are supposed to help people, their minds get set in a yes mode. Saying no does not feel right. Because saying no feels emotionally inappropriate, many pastors memorize responses they can use in those situations. Examples:

- (1) *"I surely would like to, but I just can't."* Then, avoid adding logical reasons for why you cannot do it. Most people have greater respect for someone who says no in this manner than for people who state lengthy reasons. If you do not elaborate on your reasons, the asker usually thinks something extremely important prevents you from saying yes. Lengthy explanations often sound like excuses.
- (2) *"I'm honored by the invitation."* Then add that you would love to come; however, if you come, you will be letting someone else down. This response assumes that the askers are people of great integrity. If they push you, they must disprove your affirmation of their character.
- (3) *"May I ask what you want to discuss with me?"* is sometimes a good response to a telephone request for an appointment, especially with salespeople. If the subject is something that does not fit your goals and priorities, tell them so. "It is probably better for me to say no now than to spend thirty minutes of your time, and then disappoint you with the same answer."
- (4) *"Let me look at my calendar and get back to you."* After doing that, say, "I'm sorry, but I have a commitment on that date." Your commitment may be to spend time with your family, yourself, or God, but sticking with those commitments is often wiser than letting someone sideline your life-goals and priorities.

N. Do not try to remember anything. Something you really intend to do will require one of two actions: either do it right at this moment or write it down. Most people are under the illusion that they can remember what someone tells them and what they promise people they will do. That assumption is only partially accurate. Memory systems are quite fallible.

You damage your credibility when information about hospitalized parishioners or promises to put something in the newsletter falls through the cracks of a busy week. Good ideas floating in the mind *might* happen, if we remember to do them. Good ideas trapped on paper *will* happen, if we put the paper in a place where it serves as a visual reminder.

Use the following system to handle countless details without having to remember anything:

- (1) *Carry a small notebook in your pocket or purse.* If you decide to take care of something next week, do not rely on your ability to remember it. Write it on a page in your pocket notebook. (Do not make lists. Put a new item on each page.)
- (2) *When you arrive at the office each morning, tear out the notes and place them in action-stacks on your desktop* (telephone calls to make, letters to dictate, etc.). Between interruptions, try to complete the highest priority action-stacks.
- (3) *Empty one of your desk drawers and designate it your “crisis drawer.”* Put in this drawer items that you cannot do this week because you are waiting for someone to call or write with the information you need. Every Monday morning, open the crisis-drawer and look at each sheet of paper. Some matters have now become a genuine crisis. You must telephone someone and get the information *this week*, before it is too late. Other items can wait another week or more, so you put them back into the drawer.
- (4) *Set up a monthly calendar file* (some people call this a “ticker file”). Whatever you call it, get twelve file folders. Label them with the twelve months of the year and put them in a nearby file cabinet.

The following four methods work together in a synergistic way that releases you from the pressure of having to remember anything:

- If you plan to do something, write it down and put it into the flow of this four-point system.
- Work on the telephone-calling and action-stacks on your desk daily, so they do not accumulate.
- Open the crisis drawer weekly.
- Open the calendar file monthly.

The result: You develop a reputation as a dependable, capable person who gets things done.

O. Learn how to delegate. Delegation is one of the hardest management skills to learn. No one is born with it. Our childhood training equips us for doing things ourselves rather than delegating them to others. Therefore, few people learn how to delegate unless forced into it.

A pastor said to a friend who owns a trucking company with more than 150 employees, “I have trouble delegating things. What is the secret to learning how to delegate?”

The businessman smiled and replied, “Pain! You just haven’t experienced enough pain yet. When you have, you will learn how to delegate.” He was right. When you experience sufficient time-stress, you learn how to delegate things you were convinced you must do yourself.

The matters you delegate may not get done quite as well as you would have done them. But involving other people doubles, triples, or quadruples your productivity. The expanded ministry volume more than compensates for any reduction in quality.

Distinguish carefully between informational-communication that you can delegate and relational matters that you cannot delegate. For example, mail and telephone responses fall into two categories: *informational* and *relational*. Secretaries can handle many of the informational responses by attaching a note that says, “Mr. Jones is out of the office and wanted you to have this immediately.” However, many mail and telephone responses require a relational rather than an informational response. Deal with matters that build or sustain important relationships with church members and key colleagues personally, not through a secretary.

Psychological Hang-ups that Prevent You from Learning How to Delegate:

- (1) Perfectionism (the “nobody can do this quite as well as I can!” syndrome)
- (2) Fear of giving away some of your power and authority
- (3) Fear of losing the security blanket of detail work (when some people stop doing details, they feel insecure and compulsively seek more details to do)
- (4) Fear of changing a work pattern that has served you well in the past
- (5) Fear that people will think you are dumping your work on other people

- (6) Fear that training someone will take longer than continuing to do the job yourself
- (7) The feeling that there is only one right way to do a job
- (8) Failure to recognize that people who have more responsibility and authority feel better about their jobs

Beliefs that Fuel Your Delegation Ability:

- (1) Getting the job done is more important than who does the job.
- (2) Other people can do a job well if you give them sufficient authority, training, and experience.
- (3) Employees like leaders who delegate and dislike leaders who do not delegate.
- (4) You do people a favor by allowing them the same joy of achievement that you like to experience.
- (5) Delegating work only to the ablest members of the team is highly detrimental. You overwork and burn out the ablest members of your team. You prevent the least able team members from sharpening their skills.
- (6) Setting a mutually agreed upon deadline date increases your chances of getting something done quickly and with enthusiasm.
- (7) Giving people the freedom and responsibility to do a job, yet not losing contact with how they are doing, defines a good coach.

Five Steps for Training Someone:

- (1) Tell them the “why” behind the task. Describe the positive, end-result value of this project.
- (2) Show them what you want done and how.
- (3) Let them do it.
- (4) Check to see how well they are doing it.
- (5) If they are making a mistake, start over. Tell them the “why” behind the task. Repeat the steps.

Four Stages of Delegation and Four Questions Everyone to Whom You Delegate Asks:

- (1) Assignment: what am I supposed to do?
- (2) Authority: will you let me do it?
- (3) Accountability: will you help me when I need it?
- (4) Affirmation: will you let me know how I’m doing?

Hans Finzel, *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make* (Colorado Springs: Cook Communications, 2000), pp.102-103 and quoting Lorne Sanny, *The Business Ministry Journal*, 1992.

Most of your delegation work is horizontal—to people around you. A few pieces of your delegation work are vertical. This is called faith. After you complete your horizontal delegation to other people, a few items will remain that neither you nor other people can handle. Delegate these to God. Only he in his own good time can do anything about them.

Pastors who do not learn vertical delegation have a driven, ineffectual ministry. A few of them will suffer emotional breakdown. Terry Hershey describes the letter he got from God: “Dear Terry: I know that being in control makes you feel better. But I can handle it. Thanks, anyway. Love, God” (*Giving the Ministry Away*, Terry Hershey and Rich Hurst, Christian Focus, Inc., Woodlinville, Washington)

P. Be concerned about everything but avoid taking responsibility for the details of everything.

Getting promoted to a management job or moving from a small church to a large church has an unexpected hazard: the very skills that caused the promotion may prevent you from doing well in the new position. The higher up in an organization you move, the more you work with people rather than details. If you fail to make that transition, you handicap your effectiveness.

Concern for people's ministries is a Christian attitude. Trying to take responsibility for all of the details in their ministries means you are playing God. You are also breaking one of the Ten Commandments, stealing something that does not belong to you.

Q. If you have a secretary, learn to use a dictating machine. Dictate—not just letters—but also filing or project assignments to your secretary and memos to staff. A portable dictating unit saves countless hours of conversations with your secretary, a procedure that on routine matters wastes the time of two people, not just one.

R. Handle your mail only once. Some pastors open their mail, glance at it, and lay it on the desk. They came back the next day and look at it again, trying to decide what to do with it. Some people waste tons of time by looking at their mail four or five times. Take one of four actions with every piece of mail *the first time you look at it*:

- Read it and throw it away.
- File it, or dictate instructions that ask your secretary to file it for you.
- Take action on it immediately, or put it in one of the action-stacks on your desk—phone calls, letters to write, etc.
- Put it in the “take action tomorrow” stack on your desk (some mail is complicated and you need to think about it overnight before responding). By tomorrow, you know what to do with the item—dictate a letter, file it, put it in the crisis drawer or calendar file, etc.

S. Develop a filing system that is a good finding system. A universal church office “finding system” that works in congregations of every denomination uses the three standard file folders.

The left-cut file folders (red label) are the major headings.

The middle-cut file folders (blue label) are the subheadings.

The right-cut file folders (green label) are the sub-subheadings.

The left-cut file folders (major headings) are universal categories that cross all denominational and church-size lines.

Most of the middle-cut files (subheadings) differ from one pastor and congregation to another.

The right-cut files (sub-subheadings) also differ from church to church.

Left-cut file folders (major headings): Administration, Christian Education, Community Agencies, Denominational Ministries, Evangelism, Homiletics, Membership Development, Ministry, Missions, Pastoral Care, Property, Public Relations, Stewardship, Worship.

Middle-cut file folders (subheadings): “Administration,” would include Church Staff, Constitution and Bylaws, Board Members, Church Cabinet, Memorial Programs and Committees, Newsletter File (a reservoir of notes and reminders of things to put in coming newsletters).

- “Christian Education” would include Audio-Visual Catalogs, Curriculum Information, Denominational Studies, Group Study Ideas, Membership Classes, and Teacher Training.
- “Community Agencies” would include Scouting Program, Hospitals, and Drug Treatment Centers.
- “Membership Development” would include Current Membership Lists and Spiritual Renewal Ideas.
- “Worship” would include Christmas Programs and Materials, Communion Service Materials, Dedication Services, Easter Season Materials, Music Resources and Special Days & Services.

With these broad headings (left-cut file folders), specific subheadings (middle-cut folders), and even more specific sub-subheadings (right-cut folders), a quick eye-scan reminds you where you filed something.

T. Be decisive. Storing letters on your desk for several weeks and reviewing them several times before deciding how to handle them triple-damages your effectiveness. The habit (1) steals time from other purposeful activity, (2) reduces the likelihood of a good decision, and (3) increases the possibility that the decision is irrelevant by the time you make it. This destructive habit usually arises from one or more of five causes: procrastination, passivity, anxiety, preoccupation, or laziness.

Passive personalities fear deciding and/or initiating action because the results might bring negative consequences. Some such people grew up in families where wrath descended on them if they decided something themselves and showed initiative. So they learned to wait for detailed instructions.

Procrastinating personalities keep turning matters over and over in their minds for days or months. Eventually, the deadline for making the decision passes and their decision becomes irrelevant. Many procrastinators are closet perfectionists. They keep searching for the perfect decision that has absolutely no downside. Since few decisions meet that standard, they build a reputation for indecisiveness. The business sections in most bookstores have a volume or two that can help people overcome this destructive syndrome. One of the classics: Jane Burka and Lenora Yuen, *Procrastination* (Reading, MS: Addison-Wesley Publishing).

Fearful personalities suffer from a high anxiety level. They think putting off decisions increases their batting average. That judgment is occasionally accurate. They may need one or two more facts in order to make a good decision, so they write or telephone to get them. However, people who never swing at the ball strike out more often and seldom hit home runs.

Preoccupied personalities fail to decide because their energies are occupied with other matters such as family stresses. Sometimes a “professional hobby” keeps them so narrowly focused that they develop psychological colorblindness to the need for decisions in other aspects of ministry.

Lazy personalities are rare in ministry roles. However, a few people have such low energy levels that they lack the stamina to think beyond rudimentary aspects of their ministry roles.

Common Misperceptions that Fuel Indecisiveness:

- (1) *Some people think they can eventually get all the facts they need for a decision.* That is rarely the case. Virtually every life decision requires some risk. The higher you rise in management realms, the more often you must make potentially risk-full as well as result-full decisions. Waiting until there is no risk usually means never deciding or never deciding anything important.
- (2) *Some people think all their decisions must be right.* A study of financially successful business entrepreneurs in the U.S. says that each one failed an average of one-and-one-half times before making it big. Successful people are not people who never make mistakes. They are people who make mistakes and learn something important from each one. They fail, but they fail forward.
- (3) *Some people block their subordinates from making decisions because they fear these decisions might blow back on them personally.* Any organization that gets results always runs risks, and risk always involves the possibility of failure. Employees who never make mistakes or run any risks seldom accomplish anything. Their accomplishment-vacuum eventually reflects more negatively on their supervisor than making a few mistakes.
- (4) *Some people fail to see that putting off a decision is often equivalent to making a bad decision.* A good decision made too late means we decide badly by not deciding. A bad decision is almost always less risky than no decision at all.

Decision Anatomy:

- 15 percent of your decisions require simmering on the front mental burner for a day or two.
- 5 percent of your decisions should not be dealt with at all. For some things, not paying attention to them at all is the best way to pay attention to them.
- 80 percent of your decisions should be handled right now. Thinking about them for more than one day will not improve their quality. Deciding too slowly causes more things to fail than the opposite behavior—making the wrong decision because you make it too quickly.

Decision-Making Formula: Do it, delegate it, or drop it. Take one of three actions within twenty-four hours after something comes to your desk:

- Decide that it needs to be done and that you and you alone can do it. Do it immediately, put it in one of your action-stacks, or put it in your crisis drawer or calendar file for action at the appropriate time.
- Decide that it needs to be done and that someone else can do it. Delegate it to them. The higher up the management ladder you get, the more items you must decide in this way. Otherwise, you lack the time to do effectively what you and you alone can do.
- Decide that it does not fit your goal and priority system. Drop it!

U. Control telephone time leaks. Do not try to save time by having someone else place your phone calls. People such as physicians or the President of the United States are exceptions to that rule. Most other people whose secretaries place their telephone calls convey the idea that they are overly impressed with their importance. Revealing that opinion is not the best way to start a telephone conversation!

For incoming calls, help secretaries recover from the habit of answering the telephone with, "Who's calling, please?" Your office sounds more hospitable with, "May I say who is calling?"

Telephone Time Tips:

- (1) *Before you call, jot down the points you need to cover.* This prevents you from wondering off course or forgetting to ask one of your questions and having to call again.
- (2) *Never ask, "Are you busy?"* That insults most people. What professional person wants to say he or she is not busy? Important people are supposed to be busy! A more courteous question: "Are you where you can talk a minute?"
- (3) *A good beginning:* "I need to ask two or three questions. Do you have time to talk for a few minutes?" This focuses their mind on your agenda. They are less likely to jump to another subject after they think you have finished with the one thing about which you called.
- (4) *After you finish with the purpose of your call,* ask, "Is there anything else we need to visit about before I let you go?" This courtesy signals the end of your agenda and is a simple way to end the call. If they have an item, they immediately mention it.
- (5) *For nonproductive marathon phone talkers who seem fascinated with the sound of their own voices:* Call right before a lunch appointment. Then, terminate the call by saying that you have to meet someone for lunch. Other possibilities for ending the call:
 - a. "Thanks for your time."
 - b. "I'd like to visit some more, but I have an appointment in a couple of minutes. Does that cover everything we need to discuss?"
- (6) *Faithfully return calls,* unless you want to intentionally disregard someone. When you fail to return telephone calls, you insult people. At best, you come across as viewing their need as having low value. At worst, you appear to be treating them as if they do not exist. That is a high price to pay for saving time. Treat your mail and telephone call-back slips as if they were flesh and blood. They are.

V. Minimize the number and length of meetings. Meetings are essential in business, churches, and organizations. Meetings *per se* are not time wasters. The way we manage meetings is the potential time waster. These methods improve meeting quality:

- (1) *Decide whether you really need this meeting.* The primary purposes of meetings are to coordinate activities, exchange information, build morale, and share decision-making.
- (2) *Send reminder notices of meeting times to each participant.*
- (3) *Start on time and announce a stopping time at the beginning of the meeting.*
- (4) *Distribute a written agenda* at the beginning of the meeting, or in advance. An advance agenda can announce information, present relevant statistics, list options for action, and set the tone of the meeting through an inspiring quote or story.

- (5) *Distribute all necessary written reports* either in advance of or at the meeting, depending on their length and complexity. Many participants do not read reports in advance, but some do. Mailing them in advance prevents people from holding up decisions with, “I have not had time to study this.”
- (6) *Keep people on task* by saying, “That is an interesting idea. Maybe we need to study it or put it on the agenda for another time. But perhaps we ought to get back to the subject at hand.”
- (7) *Refer complex issues to subcommittees or individuals for research.* Ask them to bring recommendations to the next meeting.
- (8) *Break up one-on-one dialogues* by saying, “Maybe the two of you can get together and discuss that after the meeting.”
- (9) *Draw in people who are not expressing themselves* by saying, “Joe, you haven’t commented. How do you feel about this?”
- (10) *At the end of the meeting,* restate the major conclusions reached.
- (11) *Send meeting minutes by next-day mail or email.*

W. Use your waiting time for reading, audiotape listening, and reflection. Automobile travel is one such opportunity. Audiotapes can transform dead time into continuing education. What if you recycle twenty minutes of dead time each day? You gain two new hours a week and ten new hours a month. If you reclaim 60 minutes of dead time each day, you add 30 new hours a month and 365 new hours a year. That is enough time to write a book each year, read dozens of books, or accomplish innumerable important objectives.

X. Live a balanced life. Feeling called to your ministry is enormously different from feeling driven by your ministry. Using time-management methods for the sole purpose of adding hours to your workweek misdirects these skills. Filling every day of every week with work gradually eliminates the possibility of a normal lifestyle. A good resource to combat the driven-ness syndrome: Richard A. Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome* (Colorado Springs: NavPress).

God’s work is accomplished in places other than your work, even if professional church work is your vocation. You also do God’s work when you relate to your family. That fits into the category of something “you and you alone can do.” However, that does not mean your primary focus should be leisure. The critical need is balance.

Y. Reserve some time for planning how to manage your time. Plan to use 3 percent of your time to keep the other 97 percent in focus. Once a day, regain your focus with fifteen minutes of prayer. Once a month, take an afternoon away to regain your focus. Once a year, take two or three days away to regain your focus.

A shortage of planning time can arise from several causes:

- (1) For some, failure to delegate strangles time availability.
- (2) Other leaders get intense emotional satisfaction from overcoming crises. If you become addicted to this excitement, you lose the motivation to do the planning that prevents such crises.
- (3) Other leaders stay so busy putting out today’s fires that they fail to notice that fire prevention is a more productive activity than fire fighting.
- (4) Other leaders find far more security in dealing with the huge pile on their desk than in taking the time to plan for improvements in these routines.
- (5) Some people resist planning because it is hard work. Winston Churchill said it is difficult to look further ahead than you can see. The higher up we go in leadership positions, the less structured our job is and the more we must focus on the hard task of looking further ahead than we can clearly see.

“Nothing is easier than being busy and nothing more difficult than being effective. The hardest managerial work is thinking, an activity too often neglected by managers.” (R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap* [New York: McGraw-Hill], p. 38)

Z. Reserve time for spiritual reflection. Your mind is the primary instrument God uses to play out the song of his will in your life. What happens if you do not make time available for God to play his instrument? Your associates, your church, and your world will miss part of the music.

“It is solitude and solitude alone that opens the possibility of a radical relationship with God that can withstand all external events up to and beyond death.” (Dallas Willard, quoted by Richard Swenson, *The Overload Syndrome* [Colorado Springs: NavPress], p.63) What moves mountains? Did Jesus say busyness? Did Jesus say time management?

Faith is what moves mountains. Faith grows in solitude, not rush hour. You strengthen your faith more from taking time to be *with* God than from hectic absorption in doing things *for* God. You gain more time by properly understanding God’s will for you than by reading all of the world’s time management books and suggestions. Spiritual reflection resets the compass that should direct your clock use.

The Bottom Line

How can pastors and staff find the time to effectively accomplish their ministry? They cannot find it. Time is never lost, only poorly used. If pastors and staff see themselves as stewards of a precious gift and build on that conviction with effective habits, effective ministry results.

First, decide on your life goals and ministry priorities. Second, decide to use your time to accomplish those priorities, instead of squandering it on the several dozen other matters that clamor for control of your clock. Time management is more than minute management; it is life management.

Functioning with that “compass perspective,” rather than with efforts to use your time more efficiently, gives you the time about which other people only dream.