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Enough is ENOUGH: 24 Hours/Day is Enough

James Y.S. Wong

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Enough is ENOUGH:
24 Hours/Day is Enough

by

James Y.S. Wong

A dissertation
submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Ministry in George Fox Evangelical Seminary
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Enough is *ENOUGH*:

24 Hours/Day is Enough

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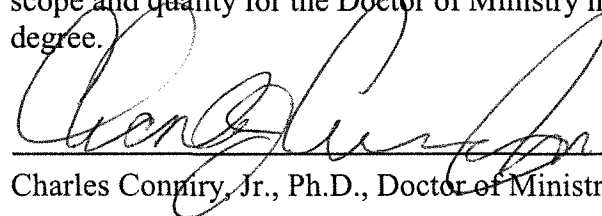
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Presented by: James Y.S. Wong
February 6, 2003

We, the undersigned, certify that we have read this thesis and approve it as adequate in scope and quality for the Doctor of Ministry in Leadership and Spiritual Formation degree.



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Abstract

Today many people are crying for more time. Many pastors are also. The contents of this writing endeavor to address the issue of time starvation among overworked pastors. My conviction is that the God-given 24 hours a day is enough. God will never ask from us what we cannot give. Often we are victims of our own aspirations.

The discussions and solutions provided in this writing fit into the shared values of pastoral ministry: a) our faithfulness to our ministerial call; b) our dedication to the Lord; and c) our love for His church and His people.

Based upon these shared core values of ministry, the first section presents the problem of the issue at stake, i.e., the reasons for time starvation as well as a challenge for change to live long and serve well. The second section deals with the core of ministry, our understanding and philosophy of what time and ministry are. The third section makes practical suggestions as to how to best utilize our limited time resources.

With some modifications, the specific suggestions can be adapted to any busy worker. In order to get the most out of this writing it will be advisable to reflect on the following questions respectively for the three different sections.

Are you “tired of the pettiness that characterizes so much of church life?”¹ Do you often have to be “all things to all men?”² Do you arise each morning torn between “a

¹ David Fisher, *The Twenty-first Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), 8.

² Benjamin Tonna, “The Allocation of Time Among Clerical Activities,” *Social Compass* 10, no. 1 (1963): 102.

desire to save the world and a desire to savor the world?”³ Are you at the brink of taking no more pounding? Are you willing and ready for the challenge of change? If your answers to these five questions are all positive, Section One is where you should begin.

Do you value time as a precious daily gift? Do you love the church more than the Lord of the church? Do you love the missions assigned more than the Lord of commission? What are your priorities in *practice*? Do you realize that God cares for our complete well-being, and the balance of our ministry and life? Discussions on these questions are found in Section Two.

Do you know that “time bandits” are always trying to steal our time and energy? Are you able to recognize and seize your “time bandits?” Do you know that a meaningful life is not a matter of speed or efficiency?⁴ Do you realize that you can actually “redeem” time so as to enjoy more of life and ministry? Section Three provides some basic and practical tips as to how to “redeem” time as well as how to eliminate or minimize your time wasters. A chapter is also devoted to the discussions of different time planners.

You may take the highlights of this writing and weave them into substantial actions that will bring significant changes ~~~ to turn brokenness into blessings, and to turn possible burnout into ever-growing “burn-on” for the Lord.

³ E. B. White, quoted in Lee Silber, *Time Management for the Creative Person* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1998), 70.

⁴ Stephen Covey, *First Things First* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), 12.

Introduction

Introduction

“The greatest human need is not to learn
how to get what we want, but rather
to learn what we ought to want.”¹
~ Donald Mackay ~

1. A Common Problem ~ Busyness

Once there was an outstanding Chinese movie star having an interview with a radio broadcasting station. In his interview, he mentioned one of his most self-reproaching incidents in his life. One day his conscience reminded him that it had been a long time since he last saw his son. He called and told his son he was going to take time off that day to pick him up after school. When the time came, he arrived at the school. After a long wait he did not see his son. On his way home he was very unhappy. When he reached home and saw his son, his temper flared and he said, “Out of my busy schedule, I tried my best to find time to pick you up from school today. I waited at the school for almost an hour. How come you did not tell me you came home early?” When the son knew where his father had been waiting for him, he was even angrier than his father. “That was my grade school. I am now in Junior High.”

This story spells out a common problem of today’s life ~ busy, busy, busy. We are living in an era of speed and busyness. Larry Dossey says in his book *Space, Time & Medicine*, “The subliminal message from the watch and the clock is: time is running out; life is winding down; please hurry.”² James Trunzo, a Manhattan architect comments,

¹ William T. McConnell, *The Gift of Time* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1983), 81.

“Life’s pace is so fast it makes us feel like a gunfighter dodging bullets.”³ Stephen Covey, a renowned author of several acclaimed books, observes, “Almost all of us feel torn by the things we want to do, by the demands placed on us, by the many responsibilities we have.”⁴

Unfortunately, even though these comments are true to real life, the common new belief is that busyness is a virtue. Common people think so. Pastors also believe it. The reason is obvious. “Busyness reinforces our conviction that we are important, that we are achieving something, and that we are really committed to the Lord’s work.” Robert Banks continues, “But this is an error. Both busyness and laziness ~ the first for doing too much, the second for doing too little ~ prevent us from giving our full attention and energy to doing what God wants us to do, no more and no less.”⁵ Charles E. Hummel warns us, “Today we are increasing our speed in most dimensions of life --- yet we have a decreasing sense of direction and goals. A moment seems to be an end in itself, stifling questions of whom we are and where we are going.”⁶

In order to deal with this common problem of busyness, we need to reflect on the following questions: Are you sure that what you are doing in your ministry is what God wants you to do, no more and no less? Or are you merely a workaholic like Moses once was, sitting alone as judge, while all the people stood around him from morning till

² Quoted in Ann McGee-Cooper and Duane Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993), 11.

³ Ibid., 19.

⁴ Covey, *First Things First*, 18.

⁵ Robert Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Robert Banks and R. Paul Stevens (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1997), 1038.

⁶ Charles E. Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent* (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity

evening (Exodus 18:13-14)? Or are you thinking that you are like Moses, the only one called to minister to the people. (Exodus 18:15-16)? Or are you thinking that you are the contemporary Elijah: “I have been very zealous for the Lord God Almighty. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me, too” (with all kinds of demands, expectations, requests) (cf. I Kings 19:14)? Do your daily ministries or activities reflect your core values?

Ralph Turnbull advises, “Life is not for work, but work is for life, and when it is carried to the extent of undermining life or unduly absorbing it, work is not praiseworthy but blame worthy.”⁷ Isn’t it true that if we trim ourselves to suit everybody we will soon whittle ourselves away?⁸

The Apostle Paul urges us, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2).

2. A Known Fact ~ Limited Time

“NOT ENOUGH TIME!” is a chronic complaint among countless busy pastors. They face a potential pitfall while being overwhelmed by the magnitude of endless tasks to tackle and countless expectations to satisfy. Every morning they awaken to a new day, realizing a startling fact about time ~ there is no more of it except the given twenty-four hours per day. They may wake up and go to work after morning devotions (if they have time for that!), often without having breakfast. Lunch for them is a catch-as-catch-can.

Press, 1997), 68.

⁷ Jay Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human: Dealing with the Expectations of Ministry* (Waco Texas, Illinois: Carol Stream, 1988), 63.

⁸ Ibid., 63.

Each day they race against time. They may eventually “feel swamped, throw up their hands in frustration, collapse from nervous exhaustion, or be forced to take an extended leave, or even to resign from the job.”⁹

R. Alec Mackenzie points out in *The Time Trap*, “The paradox of time: few people have enough; yet everyone has all there is.”¹⁰ No one can create time. There are only twenty-four hours in a day, no more and no less. No matter what we do, we are not able to increase the fixed time of twenty-four hours per day. The issue doesn’t lie in the impossible mission of making an increment of the given time. The bottom line lies in the fact of how to improve our allocation of the use of time. Stephen Covey advises us to learn to put first things first “by using our inner compass to align our lives with the ‘true north’ realities that govern quality of life.”¹¹

While the hands of the clock “tick-tock” away seconds, minutes, and hours, we need to seriously reconsider our use of the 1,440 minutes in a day. What worked during the first five years or the past five years of our ministry may or may not work for the next five years. We need to be open to constant re-evaluation of the use of our limited time instead of drifting into wasting time on trivia, knowingly or unknowingly, time and again.

Peter Drucker remarks in *The Effective Executive*, “Time is the scarcest resource and, unless it is managed, nothing else can be managed.”¹² John W. Alexander points out

⁹ John W. Alexander, *Managing Our Work*, rev. ed. (Downers Grove, Ill.: InterVarsity Press, 1972), 6.

¹⁰ R. Alec Mackenzie, *The Time Trap: Managing Your Time Out* (New York: AMACOM, 1972), 1.

¹¹ Covey, *First Things First*, 13.

¹² Peter Drucker, *The Effective Executive* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 51.

in *Managing Our Work*, “Either we manage our work or the work manages us.”¹³ Lord Chesterfield says, “I recommend that you learn to take care of the minutes, for the hours will take care of themselves.”¹⁴

Time is a most valuable asset but also a totally inelastic, unique resource. It is also totally perishable and irreplaceable. There is absolutely no substitute for time. All ministry and life take place in time and use up time. Therefore we need to use our time wisely, and don’t let time “slip through our fingers.”¹⁵ If we want to “waste” it, “waste” it wisely.

3. A Strong Conviction ~ Enough is ENOUGH

Today the “thirst for time” syndrome is getting more serious than ever. We are living in an age of “time famine.” Though this won’t lead to one’s death, the consequence is such that people feel less joy of living. For pastors, the consequence is having less pleasure in ministry. Life is nothing but a series of fast-paced works or ministries. We do more, work harder, but enjoy less and have less inner peace and calmness.

The unlimited expectations with limited time resources have become a serious problem for pastors in ministry. Ministry is tough. For many time-starved pastors, it is only getting tougher.

Many of us work hard but cruise along on our chosen paths. Dedicated pastors have made the right choice and are excited about their ministry for the present moment and the future. However, we may surprisingly discover that nothing is working the way we anticipated no matter how hard we worked or how much we gave. Worse still, the

¹³ Alexander, *Managing Our Work*, 6.

¹⁴ Ron Fry, *Manage Your Time*, 2d ed. (Hawthorne, N.J.: Career Press, 1994), 26.

burdensome expectations are staring pitilessly at us, causing blood pressures to unusually rise. Are we not able to have a pleasant ministry in the present and to be less obsessed with the future?

As pastors, are we enjoying our ministry or feeling more and more frequently short of breath? Can we possibly enjoy a few free, unstressed minutes for lunch and supper? Are we working too much, worrying too much, and receiving too little well-deserved rewards? Are we playing the catch-up game all the time, never getting to the point where we want to be? Are we struggling and stressed in ministering?

Julia Sokol points out, “We crafted our futures based upon certain understandings and assumptions that have proved to be incorrect.”¹⁶ Obviously we cannot force solutions from situations over which we have no control. But many of the problems that are currently affecting our lives are the direct result of our own personal understanding and philosophy of what ministry and life are.

To change external conditions is not always within our power. The bright side, however, is that each of us can take certain steps to change our way of being, hence restructuring our ministries and futures. We can always train ourselves to better manage our inner-state. In so doing we can create a balanced work-rest ministry and life. We need to have a balance between energy expenditure (strain) and energy renewal (rejuvenation).

Time, though scarce, is certainly enough for our daily activities. If not, we are either suggesting that God was not omniscient when He created time for human beings, or accusing God of being unrealistic in demands (endless expectations in ministry) and supply (insufficient time).

¹⁵ Ibid., 20.

God is omniscient and realistic. Enough is ENOUGH, the God-given “24 Hours A Day Is Enough” ~ for life and ministry, for work and relaxation.

¹⁶ Steven Carter and Julia Sokol, *Lives Without Balance* (New York: Villard Books, 1992), xvi.

Section I

Time Starvation

Chapter One

Jack of All Trades

“We tend to confuse the good life
with a life of goods.”¹
~ Simon Schama ~

1. The Scenario

“Hello! May I speak to James?”

“Yes, speaking. Who is this?”

“Hi, James, I am Rev. S.”

“Hi, Rev. S.,” James was excited to receive this unexpected call. “How are you? Where are you?”

“I am doing okay. I am now in Taipei.” Rev. S. answered.

“When did you arrive? Are you coming for convocation or just having a pleasure trip?”

“Well, I arrived a few days ago. This is a pleasure trip and I’ll be going to Kaohsiung.”

“Really?” James was even more excited to know Rev. S. planned to come down from the north, “When are you coming down? Can we meet?”

“Sure,” Rev. S. responded, “We can probably meet this coming Saturday. I will give you a call.”

“Wonderful.”

“See you soon then.”

“Yes, see you soon.”

¹ Lee T. Silber, *Aim First!: Get Focused, Fired Up and Follow Through on Your Goals* (Del Mar, Calif.: Tales from the Tropics Publishing Co., 1995) 4. Similarly, we also tend to confuse the good ministry with a ministry of goods.

The unexpected long distance call from Rev. S. took James' thoughts back to the 1970s. Rev. S. was then James' pastor when James was only a teenager. Rev. S. was a Godly man, having a big heart for the Lord and the Gospel. James had great respect for him and admired him very much.

Among the many pastors within James' denomination, Rev. S. could be described as the "number one" pastor. His spirituality, his heart for the Lord and the Gospel, his powerful preaching, his gentleness with people, his willingness to spend time with the youth, all combined to make him very renowned.

In James' memory, Rev. S. was always busy. He never seemed to stop. He not only worked hard as a senior pastor, but also buried himself in the act of church planting. Within a span of twenty years, Rev. S. had planted more than ten churches. He was being regarded as a "flying" pastor because he flew a lot. For a period of time, he had to fly to three different places every weekend to conduct church services and other related meetings. For another period of time he flew to New Zealand at least once a month to start another missionary work. He was extremely energetic, and admired by many.

However, one day heartbreaking news came, Rev. S. had collapsed. He could no longer perform his duties effectively. His mind would wander unknowingly, and it never returned to the same point from which it had drifted. Rev. S. himself knew about these problems. Initially people suspected that the problems were caused by certain diseases. None believed that such a spiritually strong pastor would suffer a breakdown. But the fact was Rev. S. had developed burnout after more than twenty years of intense ministry.

Rev. S. always pushed himself to the edge because he had high anticipations and expectations for himself besides having a strong urge to spread the Gospel. Overworked,

absolutely overworked, was the overall impression Rev. S. gave to people. Had he not been spiritually strong, with his style of intense ministry, Rev. S. could have easily burned-out long ago.

In fact, many pastors, young and old, are also experiencing the tendency to get depression, or breakdown at different stages of their ministries. The reasons could be many, but one obvious reason is their inability to wisely utilize their time. This could be due to the fact that they are not properly trained in time management. Added to this, their understanding and philosophy of ministry are somehow incorrect or misdirected.

In pastoral ministry, “busy” seems to be synonymous with “faithfulness.” Many pastors try to make themselves look like they are “busily” engaged in all kinds of ministries. Time management is not viewed as an important issue. To some, time management might even seem to be a very unholy issue to talk about, much less to put into practice.

In addition, there seems to be a myth among pastors, both in my home country, Malaysia, within my denomination, and also in the different churches in Taiwan, that pastors are supposed to work as hard as they can. The best is to be like Jesus, work till they are “not even able to eat” (cf. Mk. 3:20b). Putting it in another form, it is believed that it would be an honor to be commented on by others, that this pastor is “out of his mind” in his ministry for the Lord (cf. Mk. 3:21b). Of course there are other weird reasons to keep one busy, such as trying to get rid of the guilt for being too relaxed, or it may be just for the sake of “shutting-the-mouths” of the congregation that he is not paid for doing nothing.

The word “busy” in Mandarin has the same pronunciation as the words “blind” and “wander.” It is thus said in Mandarin that people who are “busy” can easily be “blinded,” and thus will “wander” around, like a fly. Many pastors seem to be very busily engaged in doing a lot of ministries yet, in actual fact, they may have accomplished nothing influential. They may be efficient but not effective. Their life seems to be meaningful, yet may be hollow. In short, pastors may think that they have done a lot for the Lord and yet, in actuality, they may be just fulfilling their own desires. Their desires could be a showing-off their “faithfulness” to the Lord, or showing-off their abilities and giftedness, or trying to gain some sort of higher position, power, authority, fame, influence, respect, pride, etc.

Of course every committed pastor is to be highly respected. However, overwork does not equal loyalty and busyness does not equate to faithfulness. Besides, committing ourselves to the Lord does not mean that we need to burn ourselves out for the ministry. The fact is, no one person can do all the ministries, and no one person can single-handedly get the job done, i.e., the Great Commission, so that the Lord may sooner return. We all need to frequently review our theology and philosophy of ministry. We also need to frequently reevaluate our form of ministry.

“Hi, Pastor!” James greeted happily when he met Rev. S.

“Hi, James, how are you?”

“I am fine, and you?”

“I am fine, too.”

“Pastor, I am so glad to see you. It has been quite a long time since we last met.” Truly James was thrilled to see a “healthy” pastor standing in front of him. Apparently James could sense nothing wrong with Rev. S.

“Yes. How’s your ministry here in Taiwan?” asked Rev. S.

“Oh, everything is fine. God has been faithful.” James answered. “How’s your vacation?” James actually knew that Rev. S. was being forced by the Executive Committee of his denominational Conference to take a one-year leave.

“So far so good,” Rev. S. responded. “These few months have been really relaxing for me.”

“That’s great.”

“I have been traveling to Europe lately.”

“Wow, how nice.”

“There is a great need for pastors there.” Rev. S. related the needs and their requests. “A few places wanted me to help plant churches, but I declined.”

James looked Rev. S. in the eyes with anticipation to hear more. This was not the “past” Rev. S. Noticing the doubts and questions in James’ eyes, Rev. S. continued:

“After all these years of church planting, it seems that it’s about time for me to change my philosophy of ministry. In the past, I used to play a one-man role. By His grace, I always started out from zero till the completion of a new church building. It’s too burdensome.” Rev. S stopped and sipped his tea. After a moment of silence he continued, “I guess I have come to think more seriously about the importance of learning to not bear all the responsibilities for any kind of ministry. In the past I used to simply engage myself in the action of satisfying or fulfilling people’s anticipations or ministerial needs. This is

not to be the case anymore.” Rev. S. went on to share his past ministries and his ministerial journeys as well as his present and future plans.

Amazingly, Rev. S. had come out of the valley of deep depression within months. He was no longer trying to do things just right. Instead, he had regrouped himself and headed on to do the right things. He learned through painful experience the importance of controlling his own life, thus his time, and to let go whenever possible. Rev. S. had now learned that “the enemy of the best is the good.”²

What a great change!

2. Endless Expectations

“Hurry, accomplish me! Get me done first! Don’t forget to do me! It’s too late to do me now!” Sound familiar? These clamoring, haunting, and warning voices coming from the different things that needed to be done ring daily in our ears. This happens almost from the moment we awaken in the morning till the moment we lie flat on the bed late in the night.

The following scenario should sound very familiar to many of us:

At the dawn of day, the alarm clock rings and awakening you. Since you had a long, hard day yesterday, unwillingly you struggle to drag your tired body out of bed. It’s time for morning devotions. After making a valiant attempt, you finally sit in front of your desk.

“Good morning, Lord. Thank you for.....” Unconsciously your mind drifts away and wanders, and sometimes, falls asleep. When reality returns, you think you have fulfilled your daily office, not knowing what you have read from the Scripture. Gladly,

² Covey, *First Things First*, 19.

you leave the desk, wash up, and dress. Somehow your spouse is still in bed. So you make your own breakfast. Then off you go, trying to beat the traffic.

Thank to the Lord, you are just in time for the staff's morning devotions and meeting. Your busy day begins. Lots of paper work to deal with ~ letters to write, to read, and answer. Phone calls to listen to, to make or to return. Inquiries, consultations, reviews and decisions to be made. Visitors to be greeted and served. Drop-in members to be greeted with. The morning flies by.

You then hurry to attend a luncheon appointment. Your afternoon fills up with visitations to make, or meetings to attend, or counseling to do, etc. In addition to the above mentioned, you have planning to do, sermons to write, Bible study lessons to prepare, emergency calls to answer, unexpected matters to handle, edit and proof read the weekly bulletin, articles to write and much more.

Just before you intend to leave your office your spouse calls, asking you to pick up the kids from school. Finally you manage to take the kids home. They want you to play with them and listen to their "great" stories of the day. You have TV news to watch. Your spouse also asks for a fragment of your time. Hurriedly you try to fulfill partial needs of each of them. Then you take a quick bath, eat supper, and rush to an evening meeting.

After the long and often tedious meeting, someone stops you for further discussions, consultations, or mere chit-chat. At last you are free to go. You surely are glad that the day is over. Really? No. When you get home, your kids may still be waiting for you. Needless to say, your neglected spouse is ready to talk. At times you are glad that they have all gone to sleep when you get home. However, you still have e-mails to check, to write, to reply. Also, you need to search the Internet for information you need.

Finally, yes, finally, your body can handle no more and forces you to “sack out.” It is already late into the night. Unfortunately, though physically you are tired, and are lying in bed, your mind still roams, and may be entangled with several issues. You struggle to sleep. The long, demanding day is gone. You know you need a good rest for tomorrow will be another pressing day. However, sadly to say, you experience a long night, too. You dream bad dreams, unconsciously grumble, and awaken several times in the night. Just when you are really exhausted and fall asleep, the alarm clock rings.

There comes another new day!

During my six years’ ministry in Taiwan as a missionary in the 1990s, I was fortunate enough to be invited to preach at approximately seventy different churches for Sunday services. This gave me a good chance to explore the ministry and life of different pastors. The above related daily life of a pastor is a general image of what I discovered. In some cases, the situations were even worse and, in a few, they were much better.

The two common questions related are, “What does a pastor do?” and “What should a good pastor do?” Virtually no quantitative survey has demonstrated which precise ministerial behaviors make one a good pastor. Instead, there is a sweep of answers to the above two questions. Among them, multi-tasking is certainly one of the most popular answers.

The following is a short list of different kinds of realistic and unrealistic expectations churches have of their pastors. The list is divided into two categories: A. Basic Expectations, B. Additional Expectations.³

A. Basic Expectations

³ The short list is modified from the list in my book, *The Church and Leadership*, (in Chinese) (Kaohsiung, Taiwan: Hebron Publishing House, 1997), 22-23.

i) On Enrichment

- a) Be an eloquent preacher
- b) Be a spiritual leader (lead spiritual revival/growth; set a good example of mature spirituality)
- c) Be the worship leader
- d) Be the Bible study leader
- e) Be the prayer meeting leader
- f) Do home-calling and visitation (regular)
- g) Do new-comer follow-ups
- h) Attend every church activity (the presence says it all)
- i) Hold Holy Communion
- j) Hold baptisms, weddings, funerals

ii) On Administration

- a) Have vision for the church
- b) Develop a mission plan for the church
- c) Set short, medium and long term objectives
- d) Create strategy to reach the objectives
- e) Have yearly church growth plan
- f) Have monthly ministerial plan
- g) Lead or attend different meetings
- h) Deal with all kinds of official paper work
- i) Promote different ministerial plans
- j) Motivate people to participate

- k) Encourage people to support financially
- l) Train church leaders or lead discipleship training courses
- m) Oversee church activities
- n) Maintain church discipline
- o) Attend district/caucus/corporate meetings, annual conference, etc.
- p) Hold staff meetings

B. Additional Expectations

i) On Enrichment

- a) Be the praise leader during worship service
- b) Be the family worship leader at members' homes
- c) Be the choir director
- d) Be the accompanist
- e) Be one of the choir members
- f) Do hospice visitation
- g) Do hospital visitation
- h) Do door-to-door evangelism
- i) Teach Sunday School
- j) Attend every fellowship meeting
- k) Visit every small group meeting

ii) On Administration

- a) Edit or proof-read the weekly bulletin
- b) Write articles for church newsletter
- c) Check the membership records (make necessary alteration where needed)

- d) Train small group leaders
- e) Promote small group ministry
- f) Organize and promote church retreats or camps.
- g) Raise church building funds
- h) Plan the usage of church facilities
- i) Oversee church building/construction or renovation
- j) Arrange or appoint people to participate in different areas of ministry
- k) Temporarily replace people who resign before finishing their assignment
- l) Negotiate deals with tenants for properties leased.
- m) Oversee the pre-school/kindergarten run by the church

iii) On Counseling

- a) Do telephone counseling
- b) Do individual counseling
- c) Do group counseling
- d) Do pre-marriage counseling
- e) Do post-marriage (marital) counseling
- f) Do family counseling
- g) Do terminal patients counseling
- h) Do crisis counseling

iv) On Managerial/Secretarial Work

- a) Set up for different meetings (open the doors/windows, turn on the air-conditioners/heaters, arrange chairs, have the sound-system/overhead projector ready, etc.)

- b) Do the clean-up jobs after each meeting
 - c) Do the basic maintenance work in the church
 - d) Be the church janitor
 - e) Assist the treasurer in keeping an accurate treasury record.
 - f) Help with deposits and withdrawals at times
 - g) Be a “Mr. Postman” at times
 - h) Be the church secretary
- v) On Miscellaneous Issues
- a) Help negotiate conflicts
 - b) Attend different kinds of feasts (wedding/graduation/moving to new location)
 - c) Maintain good relationship with the neighborhood and with the local community
 - d) Be a match-maker
 - e) Assist people in finding jobs, housing, social welfare, services, etc.
 - f) Spend time with people to drink tea/coffee, and chit-chat
 - g) If possible, be a money-loaner
 - h) Be a chauffeur
 - i) Be a “7-Eleven”

Parishioners have a wide, yes, WIDE, range of time needs and expectations, as well as all kinds of temporal requirements. They are on us “like a swarm of bees.”⁴ Most of their requests require a fairly large amount of time, but have minimum contributions to the goals of the church. In short, as Peter Drucker comments, “There are constant pressures toward unproductive and wasteful time-use.”⁵

⁴ Covey, *First Things First*, 17.

3. The Problem

Like many pastors, our weeks are a whirlwind of events. We could have done a lot of the activities mentioned in the above list. Yet at the end, when asked, we might not really be sure what we have accomplished. We could have remembered the preparation of that sermon and the Bible study that seemed to elude us for so long, the counseling session with a couple wanting to divorce, the chit-chat with a drop-in member, the Board of Trustees meeting, etc. How do we actually invest our time? What percentage of our total time is spent on each different category? To some of these questions, we might not have an answer.

In his article *Time Tracking*, Ross Bartlett mentions, “‘I just read this article on budgeting,’ our treasurer enthused. ‘It says that the largest single item in our budget is your salary. If we’re going to know how much each area of our ministry is costing us, we need to know how much time you’re spending on different things. Can you give me some figures next week?’”⁶

Though this sort of unkind verbal inquisition seldom happens to most of us, it exists in the minds of parishioners. Generally speaking, the “stockholders” of churches expect us to do the job and take the blame, with no or little authority. There is tremendous pressure on us to perform, both as a superman and a holy man.

In his book *Being Holy, Being Human*, Jay Kesler quoted Ralph Turnbull, “There is a danger of doing too much as well as of doing too little.”⁷ Some pastors are

⁵ Drucker, *The Effective Executive*, 27.

⁶ Ross Barlett, “Time Tracking: A Workable Way to Answer the Question ‘What Did You Do This Week?’” *Leadership* 14 (spring 1993): 58.

⁷ Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human*, 63.

underemployed, i.e., they do not have a job big enough for their skills and giftedness. But most pastors are predominantly overworked, often underpaid, and overloaded with all kinds of endless, unrealistic expectations. For them, life is only becoming more and more hectic. They feel the crunch and the acceleration of the daily treadmill. The scary part is, many end-up acting as a “savior,” who eventually becomes victimized.

Chapter Two

“Savior” or “Victim”

“If we allow our Time ‘to be controlled by everyone and everything imaginable,’ we’ll soon become a whiner.”¹
~ Robert M. Hocheiser ~

1. The “Savior” Syndrome

In a world gone nut people cry out for something or someone on which to rely. Among the many, pastors seem to be the “something” or “someone” on whom they can depend on to take the heat and the blow on their behalf, as well as to help solve their problems.

Pastors’ egos are easily hooked on the lures “You are capable of that,” “You are important,” “Only you can help,” “You are the only person I think of,” “Without you we won’t start,” and “You are our ‘go-to person.’” When an instantaneous suggestion/invitation/request comes, though our mind screams in protest, “No, wait a second, I don’t have the time,” we hear our mouth saying, “Yes, I would love to” We often let “our mouth write a check our body can’t cash.”² We soon find ourselves over committed.³

Knowingly or unknowingly a solution-driven mentality has become the norm for today’s churches and especially for us as pastors. This mentality keeps us busily

¹ Robert M. Hochheiser, *Time Management*, 2d ed. (Monsey, N.Y.: Barron’s Educational Series, 1998), 3.

² McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 187.

³ Marshall Cook observes four “not-so-nice” reasons for being so nice: a) we desire the gratitude, approval, and acceptance of others; b) we feel guilty for declining people’s requests; c) we think we are indispensable (“If you want a job done, do it yourself”); and d) we fear being expendable if we fail to show up. See his work, *Streetwise Time Management: Get More Done with Less Stress by Efficiently Managing Your Time* (Holbrook, Mass.: Adams Media Corporation, 1999), 116-117.

occupied. Moreover, this mentality drives us to want to become multitask handlers. Sooner or later people will view us as “savior.” Once this idea creeps into their minds, it will probably stay there.

Having a “savior” mindset, we will begin to work in a “save-the-world” mode. Most of us who are dedicated will try to “save-the-world.” In our eyes, people’s needs are real, and the demands of the ministry are enormous. In response, we pronounce, “To sacrifice (family, health, relationships etc.) for Christ and to die for Christ is OK.”

There are all sorts of needs in ministry, like black holes, constantly sucking pastors in. The telephone is always ringing with all kinds of requests and problems. We easily spend 60-80 hours per week instead of 40. The e-mail inbox is flush with all kinds of news and information, from family members, relatives, friends, parishioners, etc. We single-handedly handle the kindly-intended-but-endless suggestions from the congregation. The good intended suggestions vary from individual to individual and worse still, from time to time. The frightening part is everyone is correct!

All suggestions plus other requests, problems, issues, and tasks make us view ourselves as the only person left to complete the act of saving the world. We can blindly devote ourselves to the ministry. We let the church devour us. We let contemporary culture urge us to go beyond our limits, to leave our comfort zones, to excel at all we do. We try to accomplish tasks or to satisfy peoples’ requests and needs in a quality manner as viewed by others’ perspectives. We never allow ourselves to make mistakes. Even when we do make mistakes, we will either deny the fact, blame it on others, or cover-up. We resist recognizing work addiction as a problem.

More surprising than anything else, our initial dedication to win souls for Christ

and to edify His disciples has unknowingly switched gears. We may have driven ourselves to exhaustion primarily for our own glory. We may view the enhancement of our reputation more important than our initial call. We may willingly engage ourselves in activities or “ministry-per-se” that has more to do with image than true ministry. We may be susceptible to pursuing praise or committing to jobs that will get us noticed. We may even create works just to fill the day and to look important. Our “savior” syndrome turns ugly.

The one reality we often forget is, no matter how sincere our devotion to the ministry, we are not the “savior” we think. The world has a Savior. Christ has already prepared salvation on the Cross. Also, we may forget the vital commitment we once made, i.e., to glorify His name, let Him be exalted. We might preach and encourage people to “rest” in the Lord, to glorify the Lord but stepping down from the pulpit we might be doing contrary to what we just preached.

We think we are able to turn the church around or to single handedly revive the congregation. We think we are the “savior” the church is waiting for, and we act as such. If our “savior” syndrome persists, our ministry goes astray and the Lord’s will is not fulfilled, but our own.

2. The Victimized “Savior”

Pastors generally face the crisis of lack of time due to unlimited expectations in the ministry. For a short space of time we may be able to act in a “to-save-the-world” mode, or to play a “savior” role. However, sooner or later, we will face more crises in life and ministry. We become victimized. The first problem we face is the ever-increasing feeling of guilt.

Robert Bolton states in *The Minister's Use of Time*, "Chances are, whatever you are doing, regardless of its importance, you feel guilty because you are not doing something else. When writing your sermon, the faces of people who need your care leap out at you from the paper. Yet when you are with the congregation, your neglected family makes you uneasy. At home you are restless because of church work and community service crying to be done."⁴ Once we have a "savior" mentality, we will soon be overwhelmed by all kinds of guilt ~ guilt for not being able to accomplish more, guilt for work undone, guilt for neglected work, guilt for not being able to do a better job, guilt for not being able to meet the needs in good timing, etc.

We capture "the typical characteristic of 21st Century life, i.e., the complaint, 'If only I could have more time.'"⁵ We become "slaves of the tyranny of the urgent,"⁶ or patients of "urgency addiction."⁷ We may find ourselves skipping breakfast and/or lunch, or often eat on the go, so as to 'save' time.

Day after day and week after week we encounter unceasing-yet-ever-increasing needs and expectations of people. Added to these is what Stephen Covey points out in *Principle-Centered Leadership*: the seven chronic problems in organization that not only cause hindrance to organizational growth, but also bring frustration and fatigue to individuals. The seven universal problems are: no shared vision and values, no strategic path, poor alignment between structure and shared values as well as between vision and

⁴ Robert H. Bolton, "The Minister's Use of Time," *Christian Ministry* 3 (1972): 23-24.

⁵ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 10.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Covey, *First Things First*, 13.

system, wrong style, low trust, and no integrity.⁸ All of these different encounters, bit by bit, cause us to battle burnout, which is hard to detect. The beginnings of it are so subtle. Stuff accumulates.

Bernard Meltzer says, “The formula for failure, frustration, depression, burnout is --- try to please everyone.”⁹ Promise Keepers’ *Men of Action* newsletter says, “Poll after poll reveals that most pastors are battling isolation, depression, and loneliness. They are so beaten up by ministry.....”¹⁰

After investing countless hours, efforts, and energy into the ministry, we may not get even close to the result we had wished. The realization of this cruel reality may stimulate us to put in more effort. On the other hand, it may also create frustration and fatigue, which only result in less productivity. The continuous unsuccessful efforts without results increase the feelings of frustration and fatigue. The “savior” has turned into the “victim.”

3. The Problem

David Goetz points out, “What complicates matters is that while the office of pastor commands less respect, the people whom pastors are trying to serve are demanding more from the church.”¹¹ We can easily over-exert or press ourselves to do far more than we should. Also, we let our emotional life be a result of other people’s opinions to the point

⁸ Stephen Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership* (New York: Summit Books, 1990), 165-172.

⁹ McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 203.

¹⁰ David Goetz, “Why Pastor Steve Loves His Job,” *Christianity Today* 41, no. 4 (7 April 1997): 12. Gilbert Fuchsberg points out, “More corporations also recognize the potential harm of overwork: errors, a loss of morale, burnout, even divorce.” He goes on, “Intel worries that people who work too many hours may lose their ability to appreciate and achieve ~ its goals.” These could be true in our ministerial realm. See his article, “It is the Quality, Not the Quantity, of Your Work Hours,” *Wall Street Journal*, 27 July 1994, sec. B1.

¹¹ Ibid.

that we try to become all things to all people. The challenge in the ministry is complex and multi-faceted. Besides, the scope of the ministry seems to be ever expanding, and the expectations are endless.

Oftentimes after investing endless hours, efforts and energy into the ministry, we begin to pay a high price ~ deteriorating health, frustrations, estranged relationship with spouse and/or children, burnout, and much more. In the early centuries the apostles, evangelists, missionaries and pastors were thrown into prison for preaching the Gospel. Today, these kind of incidents no longer happen in the free world. Pastors do not end up in prison for their ministry. Instead, they end up on the therapist's couch. Ironically, the profession of counseling pastors has become more prominent than being a pastor.

James A. Autry notes, "I realized that burnout is not a matter of working too hard. It is a matter of finding no meaning in what we do. Not a problem of mental/physical energy but a problem of emotional energy, not a crisis of time but a crisis of spirit."¹² What a right-to-the-point comment. Dr. Tom Johnson, former president of George Fox University, remarks, "We think we have technical problems but instead, at heart, if we were honest with ourselves, we have a spiritual problem. And that's flat embarrassing, because we are supposed to be 'Glittering Images' of the Spiritual Leader."¹³

As we confront the myriad opportunities in the ministry with the limited time available, we should stop and ask, "Am I trying to continue playing the "savior" role?" "Should I just let myself be victimized by the lure of endless ministry opportunities?" "Am I trying to fulfill the Lord's will in this time and place?" "Do I define a task

¹² James A. Autry, "Bearing Witness," in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Larry C. Spears (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), 313.

¹³ Tom Johnson, comments on Spears' book, *Insights on Leadership*, message no. 282 on the internet discussion board for Cohort A, George Fox University Doctor of Ministry program, 10 June 2001.

carefully and get it done? Or do I define a task, and then do something else?”

Ponder on this statement: “Too many commitments amount to virtually none.”¹⁴

¹⁴ Bolton, “The Minister’s Use of Time,” 24.

Chapter Three

Be Brave to Change

“Making the decision to change your life starts by making a personal choice. Too often we get caught up in all there is to do and forget that we’re the ones running the show.”¹

~ Cheryl Richardson ~

1. Live Long or Die Young

Pastors who are swamped by guilt and/or frustration and fatigue generally “die young.” Outwardly, we may still be as active as possible, but, inwardly, we have long been dead, no longer having a passion for the Gospel. Instead, we may then only have a compassion for living, face, pride, conscience, office, etc. We do what we are doing so as to hold a job, make a living, evade the guilt syndrome, and for other reasons. We have unknowingly been buried in massive ministry. Now we are just “living dead.” What we are performing is merely habitual.

Life is tough, so is ministry. For many time-starved pastors, life and ministry are only getting tougher. The demands on pastors to sustain excellent performance day in and day out, year in and year out is ever increasing. Typically, pastors devote almost no time to training, and no quality time for devotion and reflection, yet they are expected to perform on demand on average over 60 hours per week.

The busy schedule or, to be more exact, the busy whirl of activities, easily crowds out nearly all time for reflection with the Lord. Carl Ruby testifies in his article *Spending*

¹ Cheryl Richardson, *Take Time for Your Life* (New York: Broadway Books, 1998), 8-9.

Time Like You Spend Money, “Reading Scripture became a luxury; prayers were said on the run. In one of my increasingly rare quiet times, I stumbled across the words of Jesus: ‘Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’ These words did not reflect my lifestyle; the yoke I was struggling to carry was my own.”² If, however, we do have a comparatively regular devotional time, those devotional practices could very well be “merely a ‘technique’ for pumping ourselves up and making more ‘sales’ that day.”³

We can easily be pushed, pulled and swept into a busy whirl of activity. Without discernment of our needs, in no time we can become slaves of time. There are always deadlines to meet, urgent issues to solve, and emergencies to handle. The important is always left behind. Besides, in all our endeavors, many even try to be perfect, which literally kills.

In trying to fulfill too many expectations (personal, individuals, and corporate) to perfection, we encounter the problem of burnout and die young. The general scenario is, when we are fresh out of seminary, most of us enter the “pasture” with great zeal and dreams, thinking and hoping to bring great revival for the Lord. However, not long after we are on the real “battlefield,” we discover that things in real life do not happen as we think they should. We are well-trained to work in our profession ~ prepare sermons, preach well, do visitation/counseling, lead Bible study or prayer meeting. But we are not well prepared to face different kinds of challenges, obstacles, attacks, badmouthing and

² Carl Ruby, “Spending Time Like You Spend Money,” *Leadership* 12 (fall 1991): 76-77.

³ Alan Loy McGinnis, *The Balanced Life: Achieving Success in Work and Life* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1997), 62.

church stockholders' controls. After much pain and struggle, we learn to give-in and compromise. (Those who insist on their "wondrous" dreams, leave the ministry early.)

For the first few years, we might be able to cope with all kinds of pressure. But this does not last forever, not even too long. Stress creeps into our lives and keeps building. One day the time of depression or burnout unknowingly arrives. It might be just due to a very small unpleasant encounter. Our heart and zeal once we were proud of could be dead there and then. And we are only in the thirties or forties. Later, we may still be hanging around in ministerial work, but it is a completely different story since, by that time we are only serving for a living instead of living to serve the Lord.

To avoid stepping into this pitiful scenario, i.e., dying young, two real life issues should be recognized. We cannot be perfect and we cannot satisfy every need. We are no "savior." There is only One who is perfect and able to save all, that is Jesus Christ, our Savior. We cannot make choices or accomplish things without mistakes. Our motto should be, "Try our best, and leave the rest to the Lord." If we have such a healthy attitude, we will not be easily disturbed by people who are often unforgiving if the choices we make are not relative to their primary areas of concern.

"'Abandon perfectionism,' urges consultant and motivational speaker Wolf J. Rinke, 'Managers who are afflicted with perfectionism accomplish relatively little.'"⁴ The solution to this imperfect world ~ life, people and even nature, probably lies in the necessity to "accept imperfection as the normal order of things. But expect the best, because most of the time you'll get what you expect."⁵ To be realistic, we need to admit

⁴ This is quoted by David Stauffer in his article, "Pump Up Your Volume! A Dozen Ideas for Boosting Personal Productivity," *Harvard Management Update*, Article Reprint, no.U9809D (September 1998): 3.

that we cannot do everything. Even if we could, we would not do them equally well. There are always more important contributions to be made and more important opportunities to serve than there is time available, not to mention the always abundant problems and crises.

We need to discover, acknowledge, and honor our limits as ones created by God. Joe D. Marlow says, “As we indeed see ourselves as weak and make the right decisions appropriate to our situations, we will focus our lives on what is truly essential for God’s will for us. This is the paradox – by honoring our limits, we may indeed become powerful.”⁶ Should we be able to live up to this understanding, instead of dying young, we will live long in carrying out the ministry for which Christ has commissioned us.

2. Proactive or Reactive

“Find a need and fill it.” “Fill the needs around you.” These are popular maxims meant to motivate pastors. Anyone who follows these maxims will soon cry out, “The ministry is killing me.” The reasons could be many, but also be as simple as having a wrong attitude, what Parker J. Palmer calls, “‘functional atheism’ ~ the belief that ultimate responsibility for everything rests with *me*.”⁷

“Functional atheism leads to dysfunctional behavior on every level of our lives: workaholism, burnout, stress and strain and broken relationships, unhealthy priorities,” says Parker. “It is the reason the average group can tolerate only 15 seconds of silence;

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Joe D. Marlow, “Honoring Our Limits: Critical Choices for Busy Ministers,” *Church Administration*, 40 (September 1998): 32.

⁷ Parker J. Palmer, “Leading From Within,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 205.

people believe that if they are not making noise, nothing is happening.”⁸ This could be one of the reasons pastors are typically running out of time.

To avoid being pushed, pulled, forced or swept into a busy whirl of activities, make a change. Florence Schulz points out in her article *Over- or self-organized?* “Christians are free under God alone and (supposedly) in control of their own lives.”⁹ Pastors are the same. It is so true that there are immense and unpredictable demands on pastors’ time. However, though we have no power to change the external conditions, we need to have the courage to evaluate, to make changes, i.e., when needed, to give up the important things for the more important ones, to give up the good for the best, and to do it with a clear conscience.

We need to “discern both the real needs and our own unique capabilities, and carry out the vision”¹⁰ we developed through and in prayer. Parker J. Palmer comments in his book *The Active Life*, “When our action is dictated by factors external to our souls, we do not live active lives but reactive lives.”¹¹ In short, we should be able to improve the manageability of our inner state.

We should be wise in not trying to spend time on a “catch-as-catch-can” basis in our ministry. To be effective, we need to learn control over the content of what we want to do as well as the timing to do it. In so doing, we will be able to increase our leverage and multiply the value of our time spent in ministry. In addition, we need to have as much

⁸ Ibid., 205-206.

⁹ Florence Schulz, “Over- or Self-organized?” *International Journal of Religious Education*, 39 (July-August 1963): 11.

¹⁰ Covey, *First Things First*, 19.

¹¹ Parker J. Palmer, *The Active Life: Wisdom for Work, Creativity, and Caring* (San Francisco: Harper Collins Publishers, 1991), 39.

discretionary time as possible. The most viable solution to find this discretionary time is to reduce the possibilities of allowing a “monkey” to be transferred from our co-workers, or subordinates, or church board members, or even parishioners, back onto us. If we allow this to happen several times a week, the loss of control of our time and agenda is inevitable.¹²

In order to live long instead of dying young, we need to make changes. The things we are doing that we are sure are right we do not need to change. Otherwise, we should have the courage to change. To change, we need to prepare to face challenges. However, “all real growth and progress is made step by step following a natural sequence of development.” says Stephen Covey.¹³ He also reminds us not to make any attempt “to short-cut natural processes ~ substituting expediency for priority, imitation for innovation, cosmetic for character, style for substance, and pretense for competence.”¹⁴ We need change to obtain better growth, rewards and results, but, we also need to avoid taking short-cuts.

In short, in an effort to make change, we have to ask ourselves if we are opening up new opportunities for growth, efficiency, effectiveness, and better results. Or are we merely continuing, in different manners, “to look for a quick fix around symptoms, the acute painful symptoms, rather than deal with the chronic habit patterns built into day-to-day operations?”¹⁵

¹² William Oncken, Jr., & Donald L. Wass, “Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey?” *Harvard Business Review* (November-December 1999): 1.

¹³ Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, 79.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 79-80.

¹⁵ Covey, *Principle-Centered Leadership*, 165. Gary Hamel remarks in his article, “Strategy as Revolution” (*Harvard Business Review* (July-August 1996): 75), “All too often, change is simply a code

3. The Problem

“Chronic individual problems become chronic organizational problems as a “critical mass” of people bring these problems with them through the gates each day and, as social values, encourage instant gratification and quick solutions to deep and difficult problems.”¹⁶ This happens in the secular world as well as within the ministerial realm. Often times we are forced to take immediate reactive actions to things that happen around us. And, once we get too far in such kind of reactive actions, it will never be quite the same when we do come back.

We need to balance the work-rest ratio. We need to balance “the rhythmic movement between energy expenditure (stress) and energy renewal (recovery).”¹⁷ In so doing, we need to remember that we could be intellectually more mature than we are emotionally. When everything goes well, all is okay. When things go the other way, and divisive deacons, uncooperative members, financial pressure, ringing telephones, etc., all come at the same time, our immature emotion may find ways to burst out ~ through anger, depression, criticism, impatience. We start reeling down the ministerial journey, and staggering toward the “tomb” of our vision and our zeal for the Lord.

In short, while trying to make changes in the ministry, i.e., to become active instead of reactive, we need to deal with our personal internal deficiency. We have to be aware of the fact that “the things that matter most in life are too often hostage to the

word for something nasty: a wrenching restructuring or reorganization. This sort of change is not about opening up new opportunities but about paying for the past mistakes of corporate leaders.” This remark reminds us of the other facet of the problem about making change.

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ Jim Loehr and Tony Schwartz, “The Making of a Corporate Athlete,” *Harvard Business Review* 79, no. 1 (January 2001): 22.

things that matter least.”¹⁸ The urgent, usually less important, tasks call for our immediate response and can easily steal our time and devour our energy. We need to have a better understanding of time and ministry, and the relation between them. To this we shall turn our attention in Section II.

¹⁸ Hyrum W. Smith, *The Ten Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management: Proven Strategies for Increased Productivity and Inner Peace* (New York: Warner Books, 1994), 1.

Section II

Time Anew

Chapter Four

Time ~ The Mystery

“What is time? The shadow on the dial, the striking
of the clock, the running of the sand, day and night,
summer and winter, months, years, centuries ---
These are but arbitrary and outward signs, the
measure of Times, not Time itself.
Time is the Life of the soul.”¹
~ Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, *Hyperion* ~

1. Time ~ A Unique Resource

Time is a divine gift. The rhythm of its second, minute, hour, day, week, month and year stem from God (Genesis 1:3-2:3; Leviticus 23; Psalm 74:16). No one invents time. No one is able to control time, even its pace. We may not all be endowed with good looks, a brilliant mind, a nice body, or lots of money, but we each get the same twenty-four hours a day ~ no more, no less. These are God-given, a free, precious gift.

No one earns time or deserves it. It is a unique resource, a totally inelastic quantity. It is irreversible and irretrievable. It cannot be added to nor subtracted from. It cannot be changed or saved. It cannot be turned on or off like an engine or replaced like human resources. It cannot be accumulated like material wealth. Everyone is forced to spend it, willingly or unwillingly. It is spent at a fixed rate of 60 seconds per minute.

The time one has to live is one thing in life over which one has no control. The rich fool who proudly thought otherwise was condemned to unexpected death (Luke 12:16-20). Chaplain Tyler observes, “Time is the most inexorable and inelastic element

¹ McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 21.

in our existence.”² Edwin C. Bliss has a great motto about the use of time that says, “Yesterday is a canceled check. Tomorrow is a promissory note. Today is ready cash - use it.”³

Robert Marsh, pastor, Second Ponce de Leon Baptist Church, Atlanta, Georgia, observes, “There are several truths about time which we must learn and never forget.

- 1) We cannot ‘kill’ time; time kills us.
- 2) Time does not ‘fly’; we are the ones moving through existence.
- 3) ‘Wasted’ time cannot be recalled, once we have used or abused time, that is it.”⁴

Too often we treat time as a commodity at our disposal. We seldom treat it as a daily present from God. We view it as one of the many human resources to be exploited. We try to extract the maximum amount out of time as fast as possible. We treat it as a scarce resource and parcel it out in small amounts. We try to spend it, kill it, save it, invest it, control it and the like. We rarely treasure it as a daily gift from God, a special present to be opened with delight and appreciation, and to be carefully handled with close attention.

Each day we follow the flow of time and look at our clock/watch many times. We say and hear catchy words about time, such as “time is precious,” “time flies,” “time is money,” “manage your time,” “time is running out,” and “beat the time.” Robert Banks reminds us, “As a divine gift, time should be used playfully as well as energetically,

² Ted W. Engstrom and R. Alec Mackenzie, *Managing Your Time: Practical Guidelines on the Effective Use of Time* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), 9.

³ Quoted in Mark Short, *Time Management for Ministries* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 12.

⁴ Ibid.

big-heartedly and generously as well as carefully and thoughtfully, in people oriented as well as task-oriented ways, with an eye to quality more than quantity and with a sense of wonder and adventure.”⁵

Mark Short points out in his book *Time Management for Ministers*, “Time is an interval ~ the period between two events during which something exists. It is a passing of sequential events.”⁶ “Time is simply a measure of activity, of motion and change,” Hummel comments, “The clock indicates the passage or lapse of time. Neither the clock nor time does anything, good or bad; they simply keep track of activities that we have chosen.”⁷ McConnell has the same observation, “The clock measures...what? The passage of our lives. The ticking away of hours and minutes, (or, if we have gone digital, the blinking of seconds) represents the passing of part of our lives, and we feel pressured to do more with time.”⁸

The more work we have to accomplish, the faster time flows. Yet, no matter how well we “manage” time, there is always work undone, missions unaccomplished. This brings us to ask, “How much do we actually know about time?” “What says the Bible about time?”

2. Time ~ What says the Bible?

“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). In so doing, God also created time. However, “most time references in the Bible are fairly general,”⁹ says

⁵ Robert Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1038.

⁶ Short, *Time Management for Ministries*, 10.

⁷ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 57.

⁸ McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 16.

Robert Banks. As inferred from the Bible, the ancient Hebrews divided the day into several “watches” (Exodus 14: 24; Judges 7:19; Psalm 63:6). There was no concern about the hours, minutes, and seconds.

The two major words used to express the Hebrew conception of time in the Bible are “*kairos* (time as event) and *chronos* (time as duration).”¹⁰ A. T. Hanson mentions that “*chronos* is clock time, time measured in seconds, minutes, hours, days, and years,”

¹¹ Tom Montgomery-Fate says that *chronos* is “the numerical ‘point of time.’”¹² He then goes on to say that *kairos* is the “immeasurable, uncontrollable, timeless moment that has never before occurred and will never occur again.”¹³

A good example of *kairos* lies in the birth of Christ, which is “the great *kairos* by which all other *kairoi* are to be judged.”¹⁴ It is “a moment of unparalleled opportunity for meaning, for beauty, a quintessentially present moment.”¹⁵ According to A.T. Hanson, “Human history is thus from the Christian point of view a series of lesser *kairoi*, all related to, and given power and significance by, the great *kairos* which was the manifestation of the Logos in history.”¹⁶

⁹ Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1039.

¹⁰ Clark Pinnock, “Time,” in *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, vol. 4, ed. Geoffrey W. Bromiley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988), 852.

¹¹ A.T. Hanson, “Time and Eternity,” in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Alan Richardson (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1969), 341.

¹² Tom Montgomery-Fate, “Making Time,” *Other Side* 34 (September-October 1998): 23.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Hanson, “Time and Eternity,” in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Richardson, 341.

¹⁵ Montgomery-Fate, “Making Time,” 23.

¹⁶ Hanson, “Time and Eternity,” in *A Dictionary of Christian Theology*, ed. Richardson, 341.

Hummel comments, “The Gospel of John records nine occurrences of the concept of timing; twice it is expressed by *kairos* (‘opportune time’), and seven times by the word *hora* (‘hour’). The latter is often used figuratively to indicate the arrival of a crucial or opportune time.”¹⁷

In Ecclesiastes, the mention of time is significant. “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). With this comment, the author goes on to mention a whole list of common events and experiences:

“a time to be born and a time to die,
a time to plant and a time to uproot,
a time to kill and a time to heal,
a time to tear down and a time to build,
a time to weep and a time to laugh,
a time to mourn and a time to dance,
a time to scatter stones and a time to gather them,
a time to embrace and a time to refrain,
a time to search and a time to give up,
a time to keep and a time to throw away,
a time to tear and a time to mend,
a time to be silent and a time to speak,
a time to love and a time to hate,
a time for war and a time for peace.”

(Ecclesiastes 3: 2-8)

According to the author, each of these is to be given an appropriate timing and length of time. Each of these is a *kairos*, an event or activity someone encounters. The nature of that certain event or activity will determine the length of time to be given to it.

In view of the Hebraic concept of time, all human activities are a series of *kairos*. So is our ministry, a portion of the many *kairoi*. We therefore need to learn to “number our days aright.” (Psalm 90:12a) We also need to have discernment in order to handle responsibly the time God gives us. In addition, the Bible clearly points out the holiness of time and the importance of keeping it holy.

¹⁷ Hummel, *Freedom From Tyranny of the Urgent*, 18.

Abraham Heschel suggests that time rather than space is seen as “holy.”¹⁸ Speed B. Leas goes on to quote Heschel’s sayings, “And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy.” There is no reference in the record of creation to any object in space that would be endowed with the quality of holiness. This is a radical departure from accustomed religious thinking. The mythical mind would expect that, after heaven and earth had been established, God would create a holy place - a holy mountain or a holy spring - whereupon a sanctuary would be established. Yet it seems as if according to the Bible it is holiness in time, the Sabbath, which comes first.”¹⁹

Ironically we know it, preach it, teach it, but abuse it. We deny that workaholism is a problem. To most of us, busyness is proof of our faithfulness to God. We are often tempted to mortgage our time in advance in the same way we do with the use of a credit card ~ using the unearned income in advance. This happens with our impulsive reactions to what happens around us. Also, we cram appointments into the weeks, months or even years ahead. This does not mean that planning is unnecessary or wrong, but to remind us not to abuse the “holy” time in a disguised “holy” manner. It’s the will of God to be fulfilled (James 4:15) not our time to be filled to show our fidelity to God.

3. Time ~ Mammon vs. Love

“From one man he made every nation of them, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them, and the exact places where they should live” (Acts 17:26). Clearly there are differences among different nations, different groups of people, and different cultures. However, there seems to be a notion spreading around, i.e.,

¹⁸ Speed B. Leas, *Time Management: A Working Guide for Church Leaders* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1978), 15.

¹⁹ Ibid., 16.

if the Western view of time were adopted by every nation around the world, things would be much better. What is the Western view of time?

In today's Western world, people view time as a scarce commodity to be used and to be manipulated. They would even view time as "part of the original biblical mandate: time is to be dominated, subdued and ruled over like the rest of nature (Genesis 1:28)."²⁰ They would equate time with efficiency, accomplishments and success.

For people viewing time as money, the Western concept and practice of time-usage is not only acceptable but, vital. For many Asian, African, and Latin American people (just to mention a few), time is less valuable than events. To these groups, the measurement of time is more by "the sequence of significant events rather than by uniform divisions of clock time."²¹ The "pulse-rate" is very different. Robert J. Maxwell "sees time perception as a varying pattern in cross-cultural studies."²² For instance, "it has been pointed out that an English clock 'runs' and a Spanish clock 'walks' (*el reloj anda*)."²³

Added to the different perception of time between the Western industrial world and other nations, there is one important issue about time, which should be common to all, i.e., what if time were "love" and not "mammon" (money)? Isn't it true that this love gift, "time," is to be shared and to be invested ~ in primarily people? Are we not missing something when we only concentrate on efficiency and accomplishments? This does not

²⁰ McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 47.

²¹ Ibid., 32.

²² Henri Yaker, Humphry Osmond, and Frances Cheek, eds. *The Future of Time* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday and Co., 1971), 36.

²³ Ibid., 49. Maxwell observes, "Johann Sebastian Bach's choral prelude 'God's time is ever best' predicated the view that man's time is not God's time. But neither is man's time that of his neighbor." (Ibid, 36)

necessarily deny the importance of either efficiency or accomplishments. The point here is ~ what is our priority?

God is love. He also commands us to love (I John 3:23; John 15:12). Love has its own speed, an inner speed in us. Its pace is different from people to people, from culture to culture, and from nation to nation. The time God spends working on us should be related as love. God loves us, and that's why he is willing to spend time working on us. There is no monetary value in God's work. Time, from the divine view, is more of love than mammon (money), or efficiency, or accomplishment. "Love is life.....and if you miss love, you miss life," says Lea Buscaglia.²⁴

If time is love, as exemplified in God's work on us and for us, we should wisely invest it in God through doing his ministry especially the commission to save the lost souls. This could be just why God intended us to relate to time. We should not take the Western dream of efficiency and accomplishments to replace God's call to do "the work of an evangelist" (II Timothy 4:4) for the Lord does not want anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance (II Peter 3:9). Such a loving act for God and people makes time even more valuable than mammon or efficiency and accomplishments. With such a loving act, the Lord's Prayer ~ ".....your kingdom come; your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven....., for yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen" (Matthew 6: 9-13). ~ comes true.

4. Time ~ Value vs. Stewardship

The Apostle Paul admonishes us to "redeem time" (Ephesians 5:16; Colossians 4:5). The New International Version Bible translates "kairos" in these two passages as

²⁴ Silber, *Time Management for Creative Person*, 23.

“opportunity.” If we take the contexts of both passages into consideration, we can see that Ephesians 5:16 calls for wisdom to prevent evil and to understand what the Lord’s will is; and, Colossians 4:5 calls for concern about presenting Christ to “outsiders.” Both, however, talk about decision-making, with emphasis on the discernment of priorities and right actions.

In the past, Christians’ zeal for eternity was overwhelming. Time was not an issue. If it were, it was viewed as a secular issue, not religious, least to say spiritual. To “redeem time” was then meant to be more religious and holy, as well as to be more dedicated to do religious things. For instance, preaching could be lengthy, prayer meeting could be spontaneous, and Bible study could be “in-depth.” In short, one was encouraged to grasp the “opportunity” (“kairos”) to become holy.

Today things have changed, especially in the Western world. To “redeem time” does not necessarily mean to become more religious, but, more efficient with more accomplishments. In other words, the contemporary interpretation of “redeeming time” is to gain time, to save time. Putting this in another sense, it means to get more out of it, Christians and non-Christians alike. Worship service, preaching, prayer meeting, and Bible study are all “timed.” “Time-management” becomes a creedal term among churches and pastors.

“Time” has taken its place. Interest in the “end of time” replaces interest in “eternity.” This renewed interest in the “end of time” redirects our focus and influences our use of time. Many are trying to sharpen their skills in the use of technical devices for time management. The hope is to get more done in less time. Goals are set, priorities are

determined, plans are made, steps of implementation are taken. All of these are aimed toward the “end of time.”

The “end of time” is a very important teaching of the Bible that we should not neglect. We should also treasure the time we have and use it wisely. Nevertheless, when we try to “redeem time” by trying to squeeze more out of it, “the ‘more’ we squeeze may be life itself.”²⁵ We may have better control of our time, but simultaneously we may forfeit our souls. In other words, we may have improved the “value” of our time, but failed in our “stewardship” of time in the practice of taking the “opportunity” (“kairos”) to present Christ to “outsiders” and to understand the Lord’s will. In failing to do so, our hope for the coming of the “end of time” might not necessarily come from the Biblical view of “your kingdom come.” Instead, our hope and our effort for the coming of the “end of time” might have been born out of our personal or cultural bias dominated by a success-oriented world view.

Time is invaluable. We should commend the introduction and the use of different “time-usage” devices. Yet, on the other hand, we should be aware that the stewardship of time is even more important. To have good time-control or management does not necessarily equate to having good stewardship of time, unless we are trying to invest our time in God (i.e., doing his ministry) and in people, with love. Any “time-usage” device is secondary to the One and the people whom we serve.

Efficiency and accomplishments are vital, yet love speaks. The value of time thus lies in the stewardship of time through love. The importance to “redeem time,” i.e., to grasp the “opportunity” (“kairos”) to prioritize and to act accordingly in the preparation for the Lord’s kingdom to come thus prevails.

²⁵ Ibid., 52.

5. Time ~ The Daily Gift

Imagine the scenario that everyone is given \$1440.00 a day. Each person is to receive this exact same amount of money everyday. The only drawback is that this same amount of money can neither be carried forward nor can it be withdrawn in advance. The good side of it is all has the freewill to spend it in whatever manner they like. After the day is over, some people may feel satisfied with the money spent; others may be regretful for money wrongly spent. Still others may grieve over the lost chance of spending the money. In any case, the account for the day is closed. All unspent money is to be written off, none carried forward.

The next day everyone receives a new account with the same amount of \$1440.00. Some people may make an improvement in spending the given money. Some may spend it the way they did. Some may spend it wisely at one time and “unconsciously” at another time. In short, some highly value this given amount of money, some may value it at certain times only, and the majority may take it for granted and devalue it.

As life goes on, those who treasure this daily gift accumulate a wealth of wisdom with many accomplishments. Those who treat this daily gift inconsistently will have much to regret, and those who treat this daily gift lightly may not even know what they have lost in their lives.

In his *Time Management for Ministers*, Mark Short has a great quote, i.e., J. B. Fowler’s saying in an editorial titled “Tempus Fugit.” The quote is an excellent reminder about how we should treat time.

“And because time flies, we ought to prize it highly, guard it carefully, enjoy it fully, use it wisely and give thanks for it continually. Wise, indeed, was the anonymous writer who 5,000 years ago wrote in Sanskrit about the value of time: ‘Look well to this one day, for it and it alone is life. In

the brief course of this one day lies all the verities and realities of your existence; the pride of growth, the glory of action, the splendor of duty. Yesterday is only a dream and tomorrow is but a vision. Yet, each day, we'll live, makes every yesterday a dream of happiness and every tomorrow a vision of hope. Look well, therefore, to this one day, for it and it alone is life."²⁶

Our daily life is surrounded by innumerable options, a massive array of alternatives. "Everywhere we turn there are choices to be made. There are obligations that pressure us, and opportunities that entice us."²⁷ To make the right use of this precious daily gift from God, J. Grant Howard advises, "The solution to our schizophrenic schedules is to establish the proper priorities."²⁸ The question is, however, what kind of priorities are considered and justified to be proper? This concern will be discussed in Chapter 6.

²⁶ Short, *Time Management for Ministries*, 11.

²⁷ J. Grant Howard, *Balancing Life's Demands: A New Perspective on Priorities* (Portland, Ore.: Multnomah Press, 1983), 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 19.

Chapter Five

Pastoral Ministry ~ The Call

“Greatness is not where we stand, but
in what direction we are moving.”¹
~ Oliver Wendell Holmes ~

1. Pastoral Ministry ~ A “Perplexed Profession”

Today’s world experiences rapid and perpetual changes. Cultural quakes and shifts are enormous. This inevitably affects the life style, world-view and mentality of the twenty-first century congregation. The congregation’s expectations of the pastors varied from the East to the West, from “heaven to earth.”

Pastors are generally expected to be theological scholars, Bible expositors, eloquent speakers, master of ceremonies, effective administrators, understanding counselors, and democratic leaders. Add to these, they have to be warm, friendly and personable, often make people feel cared for, loved, and important. Of course a good knowledge about the use of computers to project church growth is even better.

What should a pastor do? There are no clear-cut answers to this question. H. R. Niebuhr called the pastorate the “perplexed profession.”² Jack D. Ferner observes, “The service he or she provides is extremely demanding, the expectations for performance high, and the support he or she gets minimal.”³ The expectations from the congregation

¹ Quoted in Lee Silber’s *Self-Promotion for the Creative Person: Get the Word Out About Who You Are and What You Do* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2001), 45.

² H. R. Niebuhr, *The Purpose of the Church and Its Ministry* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956), 48.

³ Robert N. White, ed., *Managing Today’s Church* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson Press, 1981), 171.

are always enormous and, often times vague with hidden agendas. Pastors may not even know what the expectations are until they fail to meet them. Besides being chewed up by all kinds of disagreements, and unwritten and unspoken expectations, pastors also face self-imposed expectations, which could be even worse.

To make the situation worse, a “quick-fix” mentality develops rapidly throughout the commercial and consumer societies. The idea is that, for whatever problem is encountered, there is a product to deal with it. Advertisements reinforce the message. People believe it.

With such a “quick-fix” mentality in mind, church “shoppers” have similar expectations of a pastor and the church. For church “shoppers,” a pastor should have an easy answer to every problem.

People evaluate a pastor and the church based on how well they are able to meet needs or fix problems. The provision of instant gratification in three easy steps to solve problems is seen as necessary virtues. The quest for spirituality drops to a lesser position.

“Does the pastor preach what I want to hear?”

“Does the church have a good program for our kids?”

“Is the Sunday service uplifting?”

“Am I welcomed with warmth?”

“Does the pastor know my name?”

“Does the church provide any free counseling?”

“Does the church have a good Sunday School program?”

“Does the church have a good choir?”

Under these pressures, the church may unknowingly or even intentionally turn into a sort of recreation center. The pastor acts as the manager, seeing that everything is running okay and different needs are met. The church is only in name a place of worship and ministry. Meeting people needs overrides fulfilling God's will. Messages from the pulpit need to be pleasing to people. Prophetic preaching is no longer heard. If preached, the price is costly.

The general attitude among the congregation is: You feed me; You meet my needs; You do your work; You take the blame; You get the low pay; You listen to my suggestions/instructions; You "keep your cool;" and I do not need to listen to you, to understand you, to help you, to know your concerns, to share your pains. After all, you are the pastor.

Pastors are held to a high standard of conducts and performance. People constantly examine pastors' lives with microscopic scrutiny. They expect pastors to be different and capable of overcoming obstacles that may have tripped others. Pastors should have no lapse, an unrealistic expectation.

Jay Kesler comments, "Most of us know the feeling: You work your heart out, do the best you know, and no one seems to notice or care."⁴

What a perplexed profession!

2. Pastoral Ministry ~ A Specific Call

James Glasse says, "There is little wonder that ministers today are confused about their role: we 'tend to recruit ministers through one kind of image, train them in the light of another kind, and then require them to practice in terms of another kind.'"⁵

⁴ Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human*, 31.

Robert Bolton points out, “In some periods of history there was a common understanding of the minister’s task. In the medieval church he was the director of souls, during the Reformation he was the preacher of the Word, and in the Pietistic period he was an evangelist. But, as James Smart has shown, ‘in twentieth-century Protestantism no such unitary and unifying principle exists.’”⁶ This reality carries over into the twenty-first century.

We need to seriously re-evaluate the nature of pastoral ministry. To be exact, we need to re-evaluate our call to pastoral ministry. A vague call to Christian ministry may lead to the pastorate. However, a vague call to Christian ministry may not put a person in the right spot, and it will not sustain a pastor through the harsh realities of church life. The call to pastoral ministry must be specific.⁷ It is a call primarily to serve God, not merely a response to an experience of the grace of God. Pastoral ministry is not a way to assuage guilt or to seek some sort of personal fulfillment.⁸

We are not the “savior,” but the one who offers guidance and leadership assisting people to accept God’s invitation to liberation and wholeness in Christ. Our primary cues and our ability to do the job come from God.⁹ Watchman Nee reminds us, “To what are

⁵ Quoted in Robert Bolton’s “The Minister’s Use of Time,” 24.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Lyle Schaller, a parish consultant and a former pastor, says, “The type of call that makes pastors satisfied is not simply a general call to ministry ~ that is, a call that would give someone freedom to serve, say, as a chaplain, a campus pastor, or a denominational official. It is a call specifically to be a pastor.” Lyle goes on, “Pastors with that sort of flexibility in their call tend not to be as satisfied: ‘The clarity and the precision of that call is number one.’” Quoted in David Goetz’s “Why Pastor Steve Loves His Job,” 8.

⁸ Roy M. Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care: Finding a Balance for Effective Ministry* (Bethesda, Md.: Alban Institute Publications, 1991), 14.

⁹ Michael Novak comments that in order to identify callings, “two things are normally required: the God-given ability to do the job, and (equally God-given) enjoyment in doing it because of your desire

we to be consecrated? Not to Christian work, but to the will of God, to be and to do whatever He requires.”¹⁰

The Apostle Paul exemplifies his vivid conviction of the call to ministry in the opening sentence of most of his letters (I Corinthians 1:1; II Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; I Timothy 1:1; II Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1). He declares his commitment to apostleship is by the will of God. In Romans 1, Paul makes it even clearer that he is called and set apart by God for apostolic work through the exalted Christ (Romans 1:1, 5). This call encompasses his entire life.

Our call to pastoral ministry must be clear. Our sense of purpose comes from our identity as Christ’s servants, and not as people-pleasers. We need to maintain balance between fulfilling God’s will and meeting people’s needs. We should be neither obnoxious and insensitive, nor be easily manipulated by people for good or evil.

In a culture losing God-consciousness, our call to pastoral ministry is to become people who “understand the times and know what [the church] should do” (cf. I Chronicles 12:32). David Fisher points out, “One thing is certain: The world in which the church lives and works is not only changing with escalating speed, it is fundamentally different from the world of a generation ago.”¹¹ Fisher also says, “Leaders must know national trends and local folkways. Effective ministry depends on pastors knowing what time it is and knowing what to do about it.”¹²

to do it.” See his work, *Business As a Calling: Work and the Examined Life* (New York: Free Press, 1996), 19.

¹⁰ Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human*, 9.

¹¹ Fisher, *The Twenty-first-Century Pastor: A Vision Based on the Ministry of Paul*, 50.

¹² Ibid.

We are called to fulfill God's will, to work with Him and to do what He wants us to do. The work of ministry is profoundly important because we are trying to make a difference in people's lives. In order to effectively carry out such a mission, we need to know about time, and know what to do. On the other hand, we also need to realize that people's needs are insatiable and have a possibility to wreak havoc in our lives.

Always put God in first place and minister with the power of the Gospel. Obedience and faithfulness to the call of God must always prevail over mere satisfaction of people's expectations and needs. Amidst the expectation overload, we need to clear our minds and stick to our call.

"But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumphal procession in Christ and through us spreads everywhere the fragrance of the knowledge of Him" (II Corinthians 2:14).

3. Pastoral Ministry ~ A Tough Challenge

Most of us, after finishing seminary training, entered the pastorate with a burning conviction that the Gospel is the answer to all needs and problems. We could hardly imagine that "ministry would be a death march or life on the altar."¹³

Jay Kesler observes, "I saw that pastors who tried to keep up the facade of perfection, of having all the answers, were forced to repress their own feelings and doubts."¹⁴ Martin Luther reminds us, "Our office ---- subjects us to great burdens and labors, dangers and temptations, with little reward or gratitude from the world."¹⁵

The one very reason that makes pastoral ministry so hard is that, while all other professions are becoming more and more specialized, pastors are still expected to be

¹³ Ibid., 104.

¹⁴ Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human*, 21.

¹⁵ Ibid., 25.

generals. We are laboring among people with unrealistic expectations which often are as complicated as they are varied. We are having a high-demand, “low-stroke” profession amidst people who do not value our work.

There is always danger of doing too much as well as doing too little. We may have resentments after a certain period of ministry. The responses are lethargy, frustration, anger, guilt, feelings of failure, bitterness, fatigue, low self-esteem and, eventually, depression and burnout.

Roy M. Oswald mentions in his book *Clergy Self-Care*, “The research on burnout generally agrees that chronic fatigue and apathy develop from being overly committed and involved in our work.”¹⁶ One of the best ways to handle resentments and avoid burnout is to have the right attitude toward life and ministry. We need to understand that our lives are bought with a price. Our lives are not our own; they belong to Christ. The ministry is also not ours; it belongs to God.

We need to accept the fact that we are never going to entirely solve the problem of expectation overload. We have to hold firm that we are “peddling” a long term remedy instead of a quick fix. The conviction is that God is at work till the end of the world. We, as God’s representatives, are to direct people to the Savior and not to ourselves. Christ is the answer to all.

Further, in order to perform well in our generalist role, we need to diligently nurture our own well-being. This includes our physical, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual health. We should be aware of the fact that, due to the ambiguity of nature and expectation of the

¹⁶ Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care*, 121.

ministry, “it often seems more prudent to do ‘just one more thing’ before taking time out.”¹⁷

The challenge lies in our ability and willingness to figure our own rhythms of rest and be true to them. We need to remove ourselves from any agitated and haphazard ministry, and take time off for ourselves. Priority setting and practicing will help us to function well over the long haul in our ministerial role.

¹⁷ Ibid.

Chapter Six

Priority ~ The Basis

“You must learn to be still in the midst of activity
and to be vibrantly alive in repose.”¹
~ Indira Gandhi (1917-1984) ~

1. Priority~ God Awareness

Everyone lives a life under some kind of priority system. The list of priorities may differ for different people. The written list of our priorities may also differ from the actual concerns we encounter. Simply speaking, the things we are anxious about most probably rank high among our existing priorities but are not the actual priorities we intended.

Undoubtedly God is placed at the top of the priority list of all pastors. However, in a real life situation, the things we are most anxious about might be program, meetings, church growth, numbers, offerings, etc. We often try to do things right in order to get the church rolling and growing. We often neglect the importance of doing the right things.

The temptation to busyness exists in daily life. We often live a hyperactive, program-oriented, committee-ridden, and success-centered ministerial life. “How to get twenty-six hours out of every twenty-four hours”² could be our catchword. “Work, work, work,” seems to occupy our mind. God becomes someone at our disposal in time of need, or some kind of ‘idol’ giving us the right to do things in His name. Ray S. Anderson in

¹ Quoted in Karen Levine’s *Keeping Life Simple* (Pownal, Vt.: Storey Communications, 1996), 88.

² Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1041.

his *The Soul of Ministry*, comments, “The so-called burnout phenomena among pastors is not so much due to over-investment in one’s work as it is a symptom of theological anemia. The problem is not that one is overworked, but that one is serving the wrong master, and this reflects an anemic, or sick, theology.”³ Eugene Peterson comments, “The word busy is the symptom not of commitment, but of betrayal. It is not devotion but deflection.”⁴

Understandably, we should not be lazy. However, we should not go to the other extreme either. “Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth,” (Psalms 46:10) the Psalmist reminds us. If we are always being drawn or pushed into activities, we can hardly have time to be transformed by the renewal of our mind and spirituality. We could hardly get to know God. We need to learn to be still, and to know God. We need to exalt Him all the time in our work, ministry, congregation, community, society, and the nations. In fact, God has taught us how to set our basic priorities and, thus, our ministry. A good place to learn from is the Great Commandment.

“An expert in laws tested Him (Jesus) with this question: ‘Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?’ Jesus replied: ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:35-40). Jesus’ reply clearly states what the basic priorities should be: God first, people second, followed by all

³ Ray S. Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 82.

⁴ Eugene Peterson, “The Unbusy Pastor,” *Leadership* 2, no. 3 (summer 1981): 70.

other things.⁵ This is the framework on which we should hang all our priorities.

Jesus exemplified these priorities throughout His earthly life. Even at the age of twelve Jesus said, “I must be about my Father’s business.” (Luke 2:49, KJV) Repeatedly, Jesus spent time with His Father (cf. Mark 1:35, 6:46; Luke 6:12-13; John 6:15). “Jesus had to say *no* more than once in order to say *yes* to his Father,” Mark Porter points out. “Surely if there was enough time in three-and-a-half years for him to complete what God gave him to do, there is enough time in our lives too. We must say *no* too. If we are too busy to get time alone with God each day, we are too busy! It is time to say *no*.”⁶

Jesus was able to say *no* to people’s demands and needs in order to say *yes* to his Father, because he honored God as being first place. Jesus honored God by being submissive to God (cf. Matthew 26:39; Philippians 2:6-8; Hebrews 5:7). This is what we need to learn and to practice. “And in a ‘my rights’-driven society, that’s an exceedingly tough standard. Yet, it’s the Biblical standard,”⁷ says Eugene Habecker. Seminary professor, Tom Johnson, comments, “Obeying is a dynamic, living relationship with Christ.”⁸

The needs of the world, though impinging upon Jesus, did not set the agenda for

⁵ Martin Luther emphasizes the need to put God first through a daily act of loving the word of God. He says, “I, too, am a theologian who has attained a fairly good practical knowledge and experience of Holy Scripture...I do not so glory in this gift as not to join my children daily in prayerfully reciting...and meditating on (the catechism) with an attentive heart...For God gave the Word that we should impress it on ourselves...and practice it. Without this practice our souls become rusty, as it were, and we lose ourselves.” See Edwald M. Plass’s work, *What Luther Says* (St Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1959), 126.

⁶ Mark Porter, *The Time of Your Life* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1983), 45.

⁷ Eugene B. Habecker, *Rediscovering the Soul of Leadership* (Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1996), 219.

⁸ Johnson, comments on Habecker’s book, *Rediscovering the Soul of Leadership*, message no. 368 on the internet discussion board for Cohort A, George Fox University Doctor of Ministry program, 18 June 2001.

His ministry. Ray S. Anderson points out, “Jesus was not, first of all, One who served the world, but One who served God.”⁹

“God first!” We all agree with that priority on an intellectual level, yet not many actually act on the basis of it on the operational level. The secret of success in the practice of putting God first could lie in “giving as much of myself as I know to as much of Christ as I know.”¹⁰ To take it a step further, we need to strive “to get the right things done, not necessarily the most things done,”¹¹ and “to respond at the right time, not necessarily in the quickest time.”¹²

“Prominent in Jesus’ ministry is not only a resolve to make good use of His short length of time but, also, a sense of the right time for right action.”¹³ On different occasions, Jesus resisted urgent, desperate demands in order to do what was important, i.e., the will of God. The incident of Lazarus’s death gives the best example. When Jesus heard the words regarding Lazarus’ urgent and desperate need of healing, he didn’t respond immediately. Instead, Jesus stayed where he was two more days because he knew what was more important, i.e., that God would be glorified through this incident (John 11: 1-45).

The popular maxim “find a need and fill it”¹⁴ should never be the guideline of our ministry, because “without intimacy with God, serving in ministry can become a terrible

⁹ Habecker, *Rediscovering the Soul of Leadership*, 79.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹¹ Robert L. Randell, *The Time of Your Life: Self/Time Management for Pastors* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1994), 14.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 18.

¹⁴ Anderson, *The Soul of Ministry*, 79.

threat to our soul.”¹⁵ Headley comments, “When we fail to keep God in first place, we easily fall into the trap of making ministry an idol.”¹⁶

Maybe the following “ASAP” (Always Say A Prayer) which I received in my e-mail box is a good reminder to “busy and anxious pastors.”

*“There’s work to do, deadlines to meet.
You’ve got no time to spare,
But as you hurry and scurry,
in the midst of family chaos,
quality time is rare.
Do your best, let God do the rest.
It may seem like your worries
are more than you can bear.
Slow down and take a breather,
God knows how stressful life can be
and wants to ease our cares.
He’ll respond to all your needs.”
~ Author unknown ~*

2. Priority ~ Self Awareness

“I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). Jesus reported to his Father at the end of his earthly ministry. What Jesus had accomplished within a short span was more than any of us could accomplish in a lifetime. Not only that, as recorded in the four Gospels, we see that Jesus was busy but calm, was working hard but at peace. He was never too busy for a personal retreat. He always had time on the way and also had time with God. He knew exactly what He was doing and when to accomplish it.

Jesus set the example of setting priorities for us, i.e., complete “the work you gave me to do.” In order to be able to do the work God has given us, we need to first be able to

¹⁵ Anthony J. Headley. *Achieving Balance in Ministry*. (Kansas City, Mo.: Beacon Hill Press of Kansas City, 1999), 23.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 18.

manage ourselves. We always have more to do than we have time to do it. If we do not first manage ourselves well, we can easily lose our primary focus when facing the many expectations. In no time our pre-set agenda in mind can easily drown us.

To manage ourselves well, we have to first deal honestly with ourselves. Otherwise we may fall into a situation as a poignant text in the Bible says, “(they) made me take care of the vineyards; my own vineyard I have neglected” (Songs 1:6b).

A number of authors in *Insights on Leadership* (edited by Larry C. Spears) especially stress the importance of dealing with oneself. To mention a few, Peter Block says, “Authentic change needs to be self-inflicted.”¹⁷ Susana Barciela says, “We are to confront our dark sides.”¹⁸ Parker J. Palmer says, “It moves downward towards the hardest concrete realities of our lives.”¹⁹ Joseph Jaworski quoted Collins and Porras, “It is more important to know who you are than where you are going, for where you are going will change as the world around you changes.”²⁰ Don M. Frick also points out the necessity to be aware of one’s deep identity in the first place.²¹

The Apostle Paul witnessed this long standing notion of self-awareness, “Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners ~ of whom I am the worst” (I Timothy 1:15). Paul was once a very self-righteous person until the day on his way to Damascus he met the Lord (Acts 9:1-20; Philippians 3:

¹⁷ Peter Block, “From Leadership to Citizenship,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 94.

¹⁸ Susana Barciela “Dharamshala Dreaming: A Traveler’s Search for the Meaning of Work,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 109.

¹⁹ Palmer, “Leading from Within,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 201.

²⁰ Joseph Jaworski, “Destiny and the Leader,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 263.

²¹ Don M. Frick, “Afterword: Understanding Robert K. Greenleaf and Servant Leadership,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 354.

3-11). Paul came to know who he was, and dealt with it. He did not try to do it through his own intelligence and effort as most people would have suggested. Instead, Paul humbly came to submission to the Lord Jesus Christ. From then on he walked the path to which God had called him. For instance, though he might have his own agenda and plans, he submitted to the Holy Spirit's guidance (Acts 16:6-8; see also Philippians 3: 7-14).

The song by Keith Green "My Eyes Are Dry" spells out well a prayer of such self-awareness.

*My eyes are dry, my faith is old;
My heart is hard, my prayers are cold;
And I know how I ought to be, alive to you and dead to me.
Oh, what can be done for an old heart like mine?
Soften it up with oil and wine;
The oil is you, your Spirit of love;
Please wash me anew in the wine of your love.²²*

We need to search our hearts regularly "Am I truly a servant of God?" "Have I somehow become a pleaser of people?" Remember that there are all different kinds of voices calling us to all different kinds of work. The challenge is to find which voice comes from God rather than community, church, ego or self-interest.²³ The place God calls us to minister is where our deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet, as is exemplified in the Apostle Paul's experience.²⁴ "Though I am free and belong to no man,

²² Keith Green, composer, "My Eyes are Dry" in *No Compromise* (Chatsworth, Calif.: Sparrow Records, 1993).

²³ Michael Novak's comment about identifying callings helps give a hint. "To identify them, two things are normally required: the God-given ability to do the job, and (equally God-given) enjoyment in doing it because of your desire to do it." See his work, *Business As a Calling: Work and the Examined Life*, 19. See also the following footnote (no. 24).

²⁴ Elizabeth Jeffries quoted Frederick Beuchner in her article "Work as a Calling," in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 33. Michael Novak mentions four points about the discernment of a calling: (a) Each calling is unique to each individual, and requires desires to do the job called to. (b) A calling requires certain preconditions, such as, talent and love to do it. (c) A true calling reveals its presence by the enjoyment and sense of renewed energies its practice yields us. (d) Callings are not usually easy to discover.

I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.....I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings” (I Corinthians 9:19-23).

A keen sense of self-awareness and the primary call of God help to keep us right on the track. We will then be able to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33).²⁵

3. Priority ~ Balance Awareness

Underemployment (that leads to rust out) and over-working (that ends in burnout) are the two common problems in the ministerial world. We who are in the latter situation worry and are concerned more with the issue of time-management. We often wish to get more work done in less time. The irony is we are already doing more than we should.

Speed B. Leas, a management consultant to churches, observes, “Overworked pastors are trying to do the best they know how, and the best they know how is never to let up. They forget that there is no relation between the amount of time and effort that goes into the minister’s work and its effectiveness ~ none whatsoever. In God’s work, rewards are not related to the amount of labor.”²⁶ The Scripture lesson on this matter is best found in Matthew 20:1-16, that talks about a landowner who went out to hire workers at different hours of the day and paid them the same wages when evening came.

The Apostle Paul advises us, “Do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord’s will is” (Ephesians 5:17). To understand what the Lord’s Will is requires constant

“Experiments, painful setbacks, false hopes, discernment, prayer, and much patience are often required before the light goes on.” See his work, *Business As a Calling: Work and the Examined Life*, 34-36.

²⁵ Hummel comments that “the full realization of the kingdom of God is future. Meanwhile we are instructed to be active in seeking His kingdom and His righteousness.” (Matthew 6:33) He goes on to say, “Jesus equates the presence of the kingdom with doing the will of God.” See his work, *Freedom from the Tyranny of the Urgent*, 16, 17.

²⁶ Leas, *Time Management*, 21.

discernment and gives priority to constructive rather than wasteful activities.²⁷ We should realize that “while work can be an important part of life, it is not all of life,”²⁸ because “all work and no play make dull people.”²⁹

The challenge we have is, either we manage our work or we let the work manage us.³⁰ If it’s the latter, we easily face great danger of becoming a “multi-tasking” person which often leads to “multi-being,” that probably ends up in emotional and intellectual fragmentation.³¹ The point is “the difference between an effective and healthful ministry and a stressed-out, burned out ministry can be described in one word: *balance*.”³² Alan Loy McGinnis comments, “Highly effective people are not so much brilliant as balanced.”³³

The advice to a compulsive pastor could well be: “Do less” rather than “here are fifteen ways to get twenty-six hours out of every twenty-four.” R. Alec Mackenzie points out, “It is not how much we have done but, rather, what we do with the time we have ~ how well we utilize it.”³⁴

The questions we should ask ourselves are: Are we doing the church and ourselves

²⁷ Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1041.

²⁸ David Heetland, “Stewards of Our Time,” *Christian Ministry* 24 (September-October 1993): 20.

²⁹ Bolton, “The Minister’s Use of Time,” 26.

³⁰ Alexander, *Managing Our Work*, 6.

³¹ Montgomery-Fate, “Making Time,” 23.

³² Oswald, *Clergy Self Care*, 83.

³³ McGinnis, a family therapist, makes such a statement only after interviewing three hundred men and women. “By comparison,” says McGinnis, “the most successful people tend to lead a ‘rounded’ life: while they work hard on the job, they also spend time with family and friends.” See his work, *The Balanced Life: Achieving Success in Work and Life*, 9.

³⁴ Mackenzie, *The Time Trap*, 2.

any favor if we run ourselves ragged trying to “save the world?”³⁵ Do we “hallow rest” as much as God does (cf. Genesis 2:2-3)? Are we “seeking to justify ourselves by our work rather than by our faith in God’s ability to look after things”³⁶ (cf. Psalm 127:1)? Do we believe that for what God wants us to do, twenty-four hours is enough? (Otherwise we are complaining that God is not omniscient, for He does not know our real life conditions.)

Remember what God said in Psalm 46:10: “Be still, and know that I am God.” Also, the prophet Isaiah proclaims what the sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel has said, “In repentance and rest is your salvation, in quietness and trust is your strength, but you would have none of it” (Isaiah 30:15). We have to learn “to let go of past habits, outdated priorities, and old perspectives.”³⁷ To do so, we need to plant ourselves next to the streams of renewing water that are from God. We will then be nourished and refreshed to see things differently, and be able to make better use of our time.

“Time-out” in a ball game is a strategy to get a break, to regroup and to give new tactics. Recess in school and in a working day gives students and people a pause to relax, to go to restroom, to take a quick snack or a cup of drink, and to refresh their minds. The pause in a piece of music helps to beautify the melody. John Ruskin says, “There is no music in a ‘rest’ but there’s the making of music in it. And people are always missing that part of the life melody.”³⁸ A Chinese folk-saying goes, “Resting is for furthering the journey.” We walk and work for the purpose of reaching a different level of life. To stop

³⁵ Heetland, “Stewards of Our Time,” 20.

³⁶ Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1040.

³⁷ McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 213.

³⁸ Engstrom & Mackenzie, *Managing Your Time: Practical Guidelines*, 33.

on the way is for the sake of enjoying our present level of life.

“The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to Him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, He said to them, ‘Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest.’” (Mark 6:30-31) This passage shows us that, though there are needs to be met, Jesus is concerned about our personal need to rest even more than many of us are.

“In vain you rise early and stay up late, toiling for food to eat ~ for He grants sleep to those he loves.” (Psalm 127:2) We need to faithfully work hard. Yet, we also need to “pause long enough to relish God’s goodness toward us, or meditate on His truth.”³⁹ “It’s easy to say ‘no!’ when there is a deeper ‘yes!’ burning inside.”⁴⁰

May be it is time for us to reflect on our present priority list. Who, or what, is at the top of the list? Any balance? What is the burning ‘yes’ inside us?

³⁹ Bolton, “The Minister’s Use of Time,” 26.

⁴⁰ Covey, *First Things First*, 101.

Section III

Time to Act

Chapter Seven

The “AAA”

“Unless hope has been roused and is alive there
can be no stimulation for planning.”¹

~ Juergen Moltmann ~

1. Attitude: The Pivotal Clue

The Apostle Paul points out that God is not a God of confusion, but of order (I Corinthians 14:33). “There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under heaven” (Ecclesiastes 3:1). These two verses set the tone for good time usage, especially the latter verse that indicates there is time available for us to do what God wants us to do. We might not have time to meet all the needs and expectations of our church members and the community, but we certainly have enough time to do God’s will.

Jay E. Adams says, “God’s expectations for any given day are reasonable. They may be hard, but they are feasible. God never requires that which is impossible of his children.”² This reminds us to recognize the fact that we are called to serve God and to fulfill His will. We have to avoid becoming trapped in all kinds of “external services” to please and satisfy people.

Jesus exemplified this biblical teaching in his prayer to the Father, “I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do” (John 17:4). Think about

¹ McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 61.

² Jay E. Adams, *Shepherding God’s Flock*, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1974), 40.

the enormous needs of his time when Jesus was on earth. Think about the actual amount of time Jesus ministered on earth. Yet, Jesus confidently prayed and said that he had accomplished the work God gave him. The only reasonable explanation is that Jesus “had fit all the activities that were necessary to accomplish God’s purpose into the time available to him.”³

In short, while on earth, even though Jesus saw and knew the needs of people, he did not try to meet them all. Instead, Jesus concentrated on accomplishing his earthly mission as was sent by the Father. The daily events of his earthly life reflect his core value, i.e., the most important thing in his life, the accomplishment of his Father’s will.

In reflection, most pastors are active and hardworking, competent and caring, devoted and dedicated to making a difference. We always react to the pressure of things to do and the pressure of time to get them done. As the minute hand clicks and each hour strikes, we rush into something else. Strictly speaking, we are not living the life of a person, but just ticking off tasks on a schedule, and always falling way behind. Racing deadlines becomes our routine of life and way of living. The scenario shows that we run after time like a little dog chasing a train, and never catch up.

We cannot help but have days spent putting out brush fires at times. However, if it occurs regularly to us, a problem exists. Part of the problem may be because we miss the core of our calling. It also may be because of our lack of plan and organization as well as implementation and control of our plan. In short, we do not fit all the activities that were necessary to accomplish God’s purpose into the time available to us.

To solve the problem, many of us try to deal with the time management issue *only*,

³ Sybil S. Stanton, ed., *The Ministry of Management* (Arrowhead Springs and San Bernardino, Calif.: Campus Crusade for Christ International, 1981), 6.

instead of the underlying issue, our attitude to the core of our calling. General time management concepts are wide-spread, emphasizing getting more done in less time which well fits our needs. Thus, we turn to look for help in the improvement of our time management skills and techniques. Admittedly, time management skills and techniques are helpful and beneficial, but they can only go so far. An improved management of time may bring about a better coordinated sequence of activities. But, an improved management of time does not necessarily ensure the essential thing in life, i.e., to live fully as a minister called by God,⁴ if we do not have a correct attitude towards ministry and life.

In actual case, the term, “time management” is a misnomer because no one can “do anything to time itself ~ delay or hasten, save or lose it ~ much less ‘manage’ it.”⁵ Ralph Keyes warns that, “Too many approaches to managing time are more part of the problem than of the solution.”⁶

The secret to achieving the enjoyment of ministry and life lies in changing our attitude as well as our approach towards the actualization of our ministerial core values. It is not so much an issue as to how well we manage time as it is how well we manage ourselves, i.e., how we manage ourselves within the time frame granted to us under the lordship of Jesus Christ.⁷ A change in our attitude towards ministry is therefore fundamental.

⁴ Randell, *The Time of Your Life: Self/Time Management for Pastors*, 11.

⁵ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 31.

⁶ Quoted by Smith in his book, *The Ten Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management*, 3.

⁷ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 31.

2. Admit Our Limitations

Working hard is a virtue; faithfulness is a responsibility; to avoid being burned out is wisdom. Once we dedicate ourselves to the Lord and accept the call to pastoral ministry (or the call to other forms of ministry), we need to work hard. We need to be faithful to our calling and stay on course. Yet, we also need to be wise, not become burned out, and terminate our zeal for the Lord at an early stage, i.e., “die young.”

As ministers of the Gospel, we are not much different from our parishioners. We share the human condition. “God does not expect perfection,” says Jay Kesler, “That’s an unrealistic expectation of the world.”⁸

Being an imperfect mortal human being and being in “the worst of all trades,”⁹ we should allow ourselves to make mistakes. No one is perfect anyway! Perfectionist ideas will only kill us. Most of us do not get it right the first time, or even the second, third or fourth time either. The key is not losing our enthusiasm in the process of trying.¹⁰ Instead, we learn from our mistakes and do not dwell on them.¹¹ What we need to do is to recognize them quickly, deal with them quickly, and move on quickly. We should be courageous to face our failures and cease to be afraid of failing, learn to laugh at ourselves and cherish what makes us unique.

Pastors are generally trained to become hardworking ministers and to be called

⁸ Kesler, *Being Holy, Being Human*, 23.

⁹ John Newton points out, “The Christian ministry is the worst of all trades, but the best of all professions.” Quoted in Kesler’s *Being Holy, Being Human*, 25.

¹⁰ Winston Churchill says, “Success is the ability to go from failure to failure without losing your enthusiasm.” Quoted in Tom Peters’ “Rule #3: Leadership is Confusing As Hell,” *Fast Company* 44 (March 2001): 124.

¹¹ Cook, *Streetwise Time Management*, 133.

faithful servants. Most of us do not have any form of training as to how to handle our time (or money). We may be taught or warned about the importance of avoiding the three most dangerous temptations in ministry, namely; money, sex and power. But, we are not prepared as to how to deal with the enormous demands in ministry. We only learn how to work smart through painful trials and errors in the actual ministerial arena.

In a survey (approximately 600 pastors responded) conducted by *Christianity Today*, assisted by Davison Dietsch McCarthy, it is revealed that,

“The most satisfied group of pastors is methodical about taking care of themselves and setting limits. They:

- * limit their work to from 45 to 50 hours per week (rather than the 55-hour average);

- * have learned to live with unfinished business;

- * use all their annual vacation (average: 25 days);

- * consistently take at least one full day off each week.”¹²

The needs and expectations of our church and community are endless. We will never have time to do what needs to be done. There will always be more to do by the end of the day than there was in the morning when we began. We should be crystal clear that we are not solely responsible to do everything that needs to be done. We should have a limited area of responsibility, and our time needs to be focused in that area. We need to be realistic in our goals and practical in our expectations as we attempt to fulfill the Lord’s call.

When we do set limits, we have no cause to feel guilty for things undone,

¹² Edward K. Rowell, “Workin’ 5 to 9,” *Leadership* 19 (spring 1998): 90.

especially those that do not contribute much to the established goals of the church. We are not a life-entertainer. We have to have flexibility around inflexible responsibilities. We admit humbly the fact of our inability to be “everybody.” We contain ourselves to the core of our ministry. This admission of our limitations contributes the second factor to the betterment of our ministry and life.

3. Avoidance of the “American Culture of Time”

Death is the universal limit. The God-given 24 hours a day is the same. No matter what our denomination, theological training, age, ethnicity, or status, we all have exactly the same amount of time. Learning to incorporate this limited credit line of God-given time into our life and ministry thus seems vital.

No one is able to ‘manage’ time because time manages itself ~ it just keeps going at a consistent pace.¹³ We, therefore, must learn to manage ourselves better. Ironically, as the pace of life accelerates, time becomes our even more scarce commodity. We try to use our money to buy more of time. Cooking is replaced by gourmet frozen foods from upscale delis. Eventually the ‘meal’ starts disappearing, in favor of ‘grazing.’ We cut back on sleep and postpone having children.¹⁴ If we do have children, our children may well be ‘penciled’ into our busy schedules.¹⁵

Added to these pitiful real life experiences, many of us are trapped in the “buy now, pay later” financial maxim in our use of our limited time. “Too many of us treat calendars

¹³ Oswald, *Clergy Self-Care*, 167.

¹⁴ Juliet B. Schor, *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), 18.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 17.

like spendthrifts treat credit cards.”¹⁶ We tend to borrow time from the essentials to pay for the discretionary. For instance, we borrow from our time with God or with our family in order to fulfill our daily obligations in ministry.

We also tend to “over-spend” our time in advance in the same way we do with our unearned income. We cram appointments into the days, weeks, months and sometimes, years ahead and fill up our calendars and annual planners far ahead.¹⁷ This “American ‘culture of time’ is detrimental to our well being.”¹⁸

In order to avoid the danger of the “American culture of time” and to better incorporate our limited time into our life and ministry, we must be alert to ask questions and be wise in discretion. Ask ~

- * What would happen if this were not done?
- * What would happen if this were done later?
- * Does it contribute to my ministry per se?
- * What sacrifices do I need to make to give this matter the alteration it merits?

We may also want to ask questions from different perspectives:

- What must I do to attain the goals of my ministry?
- What do I want to do?
- What is most important to me in my use of the time I have for today, or tomorrow, or this week/month/year?

We should be aware that, “knowing when not to work hard is as important as

¹⁶ Carl Ruby, “Spending Time Like Spending Money,” 77.

¹⁷ Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1038.

¹⁸ Schor, *The Overworked American*, XV.

knowing when to.”¹⁹ Besides, we should also take note that, “anything less than a conscious commitment to the important is an unconscious commitment to the unimportant.”²⁰ The foundation of putting first things first is to know and do what’s important rather than simply respond to what’s urgent. We must manage our life and ministry. We are to set goals, establish priorities, make plans and develop schedules. This, however, doesn’t mean that we have to become a “time nut” or “goal nut.”²¹

We do not need to check our watch constantly and act nervous and jittery. We also do not need to be thinking about goals all the time. We should not be so rigid with ourselves that we will inflexibly adhere to our predetermined schedule. We could have desires and preferences, but we also could have modesty and flexibility in our approach. Bob Bolton points out in his article, “The Minister’s Use of Time,” “Planning and spontaneity make an agreeable combination.”²² McGee-Cooper notes, “By combining advanced planning with staying flexible, spontaneous, and open to change, you can create a whole-brained balance in yourself.”²³

The idea of not falling into the trap of the “American culture of time” is to work smarter, not harder. Only with smart discernment and practice in the use of our limited time, we feel freer to fly, i.e., to “gain new freedom to be what we ought to be and do

¹⁹ Kerry Gleeson, *The Personal Efficiency Program: How to Get Organized to Do More Work in Less Time* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1994), 24.

²⁰ Covey, *First Things First*, 32.

²¹ Edward R. Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom, *Strategy for Living* (Glendale, Calif.: Regal Books, 1976), 185-186.

²² Bolton, “The Minister’s Use of Time,” 26. Covey comments, “Balance isn’t either/or, it’s and.” See his work, *First Things First*, 118.

²³ McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 77.

what we ought to do.”²⁴ This avoidance of the “American culture of time” helps to prevent us from drifting away from the core values of our ministerial call and the enjoyment of ministry and life.

²⁴ Dayton and Engstrom, *Strategy for Living*, 186.

Chapter Eight

Practical Tips

“Counting time is not so important
as making time count.”¹
~ James Walker ~

1. ‘Waste’ Time to ‘Redeem’ Time

One common scenario of pastoral ministry is that just when we begin to reach the point where real communication or thoughts for sermon preparation can take place, interruptions and other needs often pull us away. All too often, we find ourselves being pulled off an on-hand assignment and sidetracked by other things. This leaves us no time to finish anything, and thus creates in us a sense of guilt for getting behind in our work.

How can we live in today’s ministerial environment and not be overcome by it? How can we get things done that need to be done? How can we find time to be creative, transformed, and renewed?

Leslie B. Flynn advises us to work smarter, not harder, because “the solution is not found in any magic, push-button formula.”² This is good advice, yet we should beware of not jumping into another trap so to try to get more done by working smarter. We need to stay on top of our work instead of frantically sinking beneath the load.³ Alan Lakein emphasizes the importance of effectiveness instead of efficiency.⁴ By effectiveness,

¹ Quoted in Silber’s *Time Management for the Creative Person*, viii.

² Leslie B. Flynn, *How to Save Time in the Ministry* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1966), 3.

³ Ibid.

Lakein means to select the best task to do from all the possibilities available and then doing it the best way so as to reach our set goals. Charles E. Hummel points out, “Efficient emphasizes the means of production, the degree of economy with which it is carried out. On the other hand, effective focuses on the result or purpose for which the activity is carried out.”⁵

What is most important is not to be able to do efficiently, but to be able to decide what not to do in the first place (see Chapter Nine). Discernment and selectivity are the words. ‘Control’ is the key; ‘balance’ is the clue.⁶ In Lakein’s word, “to get control of one’s time and one’s life does not mean to become super-organized, super-busy, or preoccupied with every moment as it slips by.”⁷ We should not try to overwhelmingly organize all of our time or use all of our time efficiently.

Peter F. Drucker observes that effective pastors do not start with their tasks but with their time. “They do not start out with planning,” says Drucker. “They start by finding out where their time actually goes.”⁸ Drucker also suggests a “three-step process of recording time, managing time, and consolidating time” as the foundation of effective time management for pastors.⁹ A good way to find out how “hours are being nickled and

⁴ Alan Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life* (Bergenfield, N.J.: New American Library, 1973), 11.

⁵ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 35.

⁶ Ibid. Most “time-management” experts tell us to make out a ‘to-do’ list. In addition to a ‘to-do’ list, Marshall Cook suggests “to create a ‘not-to-do’ list to remind you of the tasks you’ve decided to eliminate from your routine.” Besides, he also suggests to make a ‘let-others-do-it’ list regarding those tasks that should be done but not necessarily by ourselves. See his work, *Streetwise Time Management*, 233. Be reminded not to worry about making our lists perfect. We can always revise our lists when need arises.

⁷ Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, 11.

⁸ Quoted in *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, ed. James D. Berkley (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Books, 1994), 73.

dimed away in bits and pieces” is to keep a record of how we spend our time.¹⁰ Recording our time used helps us to see whether we are using our precious time heading the correct direction. If we can discover how and why our time is used in certain ways, then we have half-solved the problem. The common understanding of finding the problem and then fixing it applies.¹¹

Our perceptions about time used are usually inaccurate. We may think we have spent our time in one way but actually it could be very different. We may think that we have been trying our best all the time, yet in reality, we could be only performing our general ministerial duties, having nothing to do with the achievement of the established goals.

The recording of how we have used our time helps to clarify where our time has gone and also gives us accurate data on how much time we spend on different issues respectively. This understanding helps make our planning more realistic. It also allows us to develop some kind of standard against which to measure improvement. We are not able to “redeem” time if we do not know where it is wasted.¹²

A Chinese proverb goes, “A journey of a thousand miles begins on the first step.” To get time redeemed, try to make a record of the time used in fifteen-minute blocks for

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 41. Debra Wise advises, “Minutes, like ounces, add up steadily if you stay vigilant.” See her article, “How to Find Time You Need,” *Mademoiselle* 100, no. 4 (April 1994): 143.

¹¹ Sometimes pastors and others do not want to record how they spend their time. The reason is not that it is troublesome to do the recording but that they may discover they are wasting time themselves and are no longer able to blame others for their problem.

¹² “Redeem time” here indicates to gain time by deleting the trivial, instead of trying to squeeze more out of it. The latter action of redeeming time will, in McConnell’s comment, make “life become compressed and breathless.” (McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 52.)

two weeks. Be honest and specific. Record our activities as we proceed. Do not wait until the day is over. The recording job could seem redundant, yet eventually it will pay off. The detailed record of how our time is actually spent enables us to analyze and deal with our schedule problems, the real ones, not the perceived.¹³

Our willingness to ‘waste’ some time in recording our present use of time, i.e., developing some kind of time inventory, helps us to better attain our ministerial goals. We need to know where our time goes. Once we find out the pattern of our usage of time, we can then try to make the necessary adjustment, for the best, according to biblical priorities.¹⁴

2. Prioritizing Pays

Having found out where our time has gone, we should take the second step of prioritizing. Diligent prioritizing pushes us a step closer to accomplishing the mission God entrusts to us. We have to consciously decide to live in certain ways and not others. We have to make time by taking it away from one activity and giving it to another. The biblical injunction to number our days (Psalm 90:12) reminds us that our time is limited.

We need discernment in order to handle responsibly the time God gives us. We need to plan but be more tentative about it and regard it as conditional (cf. I Corinthians 16:5-9). We should realize that our life continues for a considerable time. We may have some control over the course it will take. Nonetheless, “we should preserve a sharp sense

¹³ Both Porter’s *The Time of Your Life* (78-92) and White’s *Managing Today’s Church* (155-178) have good suggestions as to how to record our time used.

¹⁴ James T. McCay suggests that, as we refine our techniques of time- and self-management, we may expect as a first dividend a release from the pressure of time. See his work, *The Management of Time* (Englewood, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1959), 13.

of our mortality and recognize that at any point God could remove us from the scene.”¹⁵ We can only know how much time we once had, and not know how much more we are going to have.

We may wish to have the God’s-eye point of view, maintaining a godly perspective in whatever we plan and do,¹⁶ however, it may not be as simple and easy as it appears. We may repeatedly pray for God’s guidance, but we often behave like those whom the Apostle James referred to, who had their own plans and did not know what the Lord’s will is (James 4:13-16).

The recognition of our mortality and our limits in actually knowing what God’s will is for us, as individuals, however, doesn’t prevent us from prioritizing our goals in ministry. We may not know what is going to happen to our life tomorrow, and we may not know exactly what God’s plan is for us personally, but we can know the general biblical perspectives about what ministry is. We can also know what the church is basically all about. We can even know what the church is supposed to be in its own special environment, or what the church needs at the present stage of its unique conditions.

In prioritizing the goals of our ministry, we need to keep in mind the basic concept of what is time (Chapter Four), what is pastoral ministry (Chapter Five), and the importance of balance in putting God in the first place (Chapter Six). We might want to ask ourselves the following questions:¹⁷

* If the Lord were to come back one year from today, which of the

¹⁵ Banks, “Time,” in *The Complete Book of Everyday Christianity*, ed. Banks and Stevens, 1039.

¹⁶ Habecker, *Rediscovering the Soul of Leadership*, 132-133.

¹⁷ Porter, *The Time of Your Life*, 55.

goals set by the church would I like to lead the congregation to accomplish before then?

* Which of these goals can be best attained with the giftedness I have and also meet the needs of the church?

* Is my value system biblical? (We need to beware of not being swayed by the culture.)

We have to evaluate our goals and/or tasks in terms of their urgency (a matter of timing) and their importance (a matter of value).¹⁸ In prioritizing our goals, try to spot the “ace” of our ministry, for the day, or week, or month or year.¹⁹

David Heetland comments, “One of the simplest (though certainly not one of the easiest) things we can do to become better stewards of our time is to exclude from our schedule projects, meetings and activities that do little or nothing to advance our long-term goals.”²⁰ William Oncken, Jr. and Donald L. Wass propose in their article, “Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey?,” “Monkeys should be fed or shot. Otherwise, they will starve to death, and the manager will waste valuable time on postmortems or attempted resurrections.”²¹ We should try to strip away nonessential demands on our time until our schedule reflects our scale of values. Learn to stay focused and prune our activities by saying *no*. Devote ourselves to the most important endeavors

¹⁸ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 60. Elwood N. Chapman observes an ABC system to prioritize tasks: Priority A ~ “must do,” critical; Priority B ~ “should do,” no critical deadlines; and Priority C ~ “fun to do” or “when I have time,” can be saved for slack periods. See his book, *Supervisor’s Survival Kit: Your First Step into Management*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Co., 1993), 172.

¹⁹ Jim Davidson, *Effective Time Management: A Practical Workbook* (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1978), 17.

²⁰ Heetland, “Stewards of Our Time,” 19.

²¹ William Oncken, Jr. and Donald L. Wass, “Management Time: Who’s Got the Monkey?” 7.

as Jesus did during His earthly life.

In our attempt to recognize our limits and to prioritize our tasks, we should keep a healthy tension between the fact that God does the leading, but we do the planning. Besides, we have to remember that in every single day, there is always enough time to do the will of God. Adlai Stevenson says, “It is not the days of your life, but the life in your days that counts.”²² Enjoy what we do and follow the injunction from Ecclesiastes 9:10, “Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might.”

Let us prioritize diligently with our ministerial core values in mind, and with the help of the Holy Spirit through prayer. Let us make our ministry and life more enjoyable.

3. Proper Schedule Counts

Making an appropriate schedule follows our attempt to prioritize our tasks. Not doing so defeats our purpose in prioritizing. Time is a scrupulously fair ruler and the one great leveler. Time treats everyone the same. We may hunger for more time, but we have got all we will ever have. To avoid the panicky feeling of not getting things done in time, or the disheartening feeling of being rushed, we need to structure our time usage. “Structured time is like a magnet passing over the jumbled pins and needles of our lives, organizing them into meaningful patterns.”²³ Scheduling is just like fire-prevention, without which we probably will end up doing fire-fighting work.

In mapping out our day, we begin by identifying our general daily ‘duties,’ which may include time for devotion, for spouse and children, for work and leisure, etc. Also, we need to have a general weekly schedule. Remember to keep open spaces at intervals

²² Quoted by Dayton and Engstrom in *Strategy for Living*, 187.

²³ Roger K. Prescott, “One Man’s Struggle for Order,” *Christian Ministry* 5 (May 1974), 31.

for any unexpected emergencies. At the start of each week, try to spend an hour on scheduling the goals for the coming week. We can break the goals down into individual tasks and actions, and schedule them onto specific days. Marshall Cook advises us, “Break long-term goals into small steps and small steps into specific activities. Then do them.”²⁴ It would be wise for us to schedule the most important, demanding and challenging tasks during the time of the day when we have the most energy.²⁵ The objective of schedule is to get more done in whatever time we spend.²⁶

We should, however, be aware that schedules are ‘servants’ not ‘masters.’ Schedules are bound for change and alteration. We should realize that there is nothing as a ‘perfect’ schedule. Reality in life always has a tendency to intervene and to demand change. We need to be “flexible, adaptable, and spontaneous when the need or mood arises.”²⁷ “But, it’s still true that ‘failing to plan is planning to fail.’”²⁸

Though changes and alterations in schedules are inevitable, they should not become a habitual occurrence. If so, this will defeat the primary purpose of scheduling. “Only rarely should change mean that a good plan should be altered,” says Jay E. Adams. “If the original plans are good, proper in the sight of God, and the contemplated change cannot be brought about by the existing flexibility that the schedule provides, the pastor

²⁴ Cook, *Streetwise Time Management*, 75.

²⁵ McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 122.

²⁶ Fry, *Manage Your Time*, 40. Marshall Cook reminds us, “When you add something to your schedule, figure out specifically what you’re going to drop.” (*Streetwise Time Management*, 75)

²⁷ Roberta Roesch, *Time Management for Busy People* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1998), 12.

²⁸ Ann Reeves, “Six Strategies for Entrepreneurs: How to Get Time on Your Side,” *Communication World* 12, no. 5 (May 1995): 16.

should question seriously whether the change ought to be made.”²⁹

It is important for us to predetermine what works need to be done in the day and stick to the agenda. In the event of additional pressing work or necessary job changes, try to rearrange existing job priorities and schedules. Always take our personal work capacity into consideration. Learn to say “No” to avoid mounting new jobs on top of existing assignments. Such mounting can easily cause frustration, reduce job quality, and mess up the meeting of deadlines. Remember that saying *yes* to someone else is an automatic *no* to something we had planned for ourselves.³⁰

A good strategy is to review our plan at least once a month, rethink and rework our schedule. Drucker advises, “Time-use does improve with practice. But only constant efforts at managing time can prevent drifting.”³¹ We need to work for improvement in scheduling and redeeming our time.

By appreciating the given time we have and by understanding our genuine ministry, we will thirst no more for time.³² With a balanced, workable schedule of the use of our time, we will enjoy time redeemed. Proper scheduling (and following through) with the core values of our ministry in mind contributes yet a third vital factor to an enjoyable ministry and life.

²⁹ Adams, *Shepherding God's Flock*, 46.

³⁰ McGee-Cooper and Trammell, *Time Management for Unmanageable People*, 191.

³¹ Quoted in *Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, ed. James D. Berkley, 74.

³² Cook says, “You’ll never find time. It isn’t lost. You’re living in it.” (*Streetwise Time Management*, 85)

Chapter Nine

Beware of Time Wasters

“Time is what we want most
but what we use worst.”¹
~ William Penn ~

1. Know the Time Wasters

An old Chinese saying goes, “Know yourself and know your enemy well and you will win every battle.” We know time is important. We experience the pressure of time. We use time, and we waste time. We complain about the lack of time. We blame anyone and anything else but ourselves for time wasted. Till now, we may still have no time to find out the actual reasons for our wasted time, even less to say we have the time to face the problem of time starvation and to deal with it. We neglect the fact that we can do *anything* we want, but we can’t do *everything* we want.²

Everyone wastes time daily to different degrees. The point is how to hold our wasted time to a minimum. The clue lies primarily in our awareness of the problem at stake. Yet, success depends on our relevant actions to deal with it. “Time control depends on you (a unique individual), your environment (a unique situation), and what you’re trying to accomplish with your time (a unique objective).”³ There are situations beyond

¹ Silber, *Time Management for the Creative Person*, 51.

² It might also be good to remember what Bill Cosby once said, “I don’t know the key to success, but the key to failure is trying to please everyone.” (Silber, *Time Management for Creative Person*, 18)

³ Merrill E. Douglass and Donna N. Douglass, *Manage Your Time, Manage Your Work, Manage Yourself* (New York: AMACOM, 1980), 116.

our control (external time wasters), but others are our choice (internal time wasters). In large measure, we generally are the ones who choose to waste time.

But, what actually is a time waster? The answer to this question presumably can only be found in a manner of comparison. When we choose to do something of lesser importance, then we are probably stuck with a time waster. “Importance is determined by measuring your activities against your objectives.”⁴ In other words, a time waster is an activity which occupies our time but does not produce a corresponding amount of value in actualizing of our objectives. Careful determination of our objectives becomes a vital step in minimizing time wasted.

Without objectives, time-waste is not an issue. Without objectives, any activity can be as good as any other activity. Once we have objectives, we are facing choices of making best use of our limited time. Once we make a choice, the question whether our time is wasted or creditable surfaces. Often, “we are continually besieged by circumstances and temptations designed to obstruct our meaningful use of time.”⁵

Are we able to ‘redeem’ time? The answer is positive. Time can actually be redeemed through the discernment of priorities and the determination to take right actions. In other words, we can ‘redeem’ time, if we are able to identify time wasters and to eliminate them, leaving only the important to do.⁶ To achieve this in the best possible way, first make an assessment of our present use of time, especially our habitual activities.⁷

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Porter, *The Time of Your Life*, 95.

⁶ See footnote no. 13 of Chapter Eight. See also Section Four of Chapter Four.

We may want to ask ourselves these questions: Are these activities contributing to the accomplishment of the objectives we have? To what degree? How effective? Can any of these activities be replaced or improved for higher efficiency? Which of these activities could be delegated? What are the top five external time wasters? What are the top five internal time wasters? (See “Assess the Time Wasters” in the next section for the differences between the external and the internal time wasters.) What are the solutions to these time wasters? How can we implement the solutions sought?⁸

In his instructions to the twelve (Luke 9:1-6) and the seventy (Luke 10:1-11) before sending them out, Jesus expressed his concerns about possible time wasters. For instance, “do not greet anyone on the road” or “do not move from house to house” (Luke 10:4b, 7b) could be an advice of avoiding excessive socializing.

In trying to deal with time wasters, we need to discern the good from the best, so as to have a better use of time. William James comments, “The art of being wise is the art of knowing what to overlook.”⁹ We should not squeeze all the joy out of our life and ministry for joy is life. Our goal should be to try to use our time more wisely so that we can enjoy our life and ministry more, not less.¹⁰

2. Assess the Time Wasters

To make a self-assessment of any sort is never pleasant. To do so, takes effort and courage. However, in order to improve in an area of concern, making a relevant and

⁷ See Chapter Eight. Jeffery J. Mayer advises to use “a system known as ‘addition by subtraction,’ i.e., by eliminating the wasted time to gain time.” See his work, *Time Management for Dummies*, 2d ed. (Foster City, Calif.: IDG Books Worldwide, 1999), 2.

⁸ There are more related questions in the third section of Chapter Seven.

⁹ This is quoted in Karen Levine’s *Keeping Life Simple*, 101.

¹⁰ Elwood N. Chapman, *Supervisor’s Survival Kit: Your First Step into Management*, 184.

honest assessment is inevitable. This section asks us to discern the common time wasters we often encounter. The lists provided below are merely a thought-provoking instrument.

To get a better result out of the assessment of our time wasters, there are a few stages to follow: (a) Glance through the lists and add to them anything you consider as time wasters. (b) Pick out the top five time wasters from each list. (c) Number these top five according to the seriousness of each of them. (d) Pick the number one time waster in each list. (e) Develop solutions to each of them. (f) Implement the solutions. (g) Evaluate and then modify the solutions if necessary. Deal with one or two time wasters seriously to begin with. Remember, “we” ourselves are the ones who choose to waste or utilize time.

A. External Time Wasters (Unable to control by ourselves)

- Interruptions (drop-in visitors, telephones)
- Shifting of tasks (switching from one undone work to another)
- Vague objectives (no clear, specific criteria for evaluation)
- Unclear job description (everyone can expect us to do something he/she thinks we should be doing)
- Meetings (unnecessary, inefficient, lengthy, unscheduled)
- Poor communication (different anticipation, expectation, misdirection, misconception, lack of information, and misinformation)
- Routine tasks involving too much trivia (reading/writing reports, reading/writing letters or memos, and other voluminous reading material)
- Equipment problem (lack of equipment, poor equipment often breaks down)
- Travel (distance, length of days, nature)

- Indecision (by your superior, co-workers, committee)¹¹
- Staff problem (low morale, untrained)
- Mistakes (by others)
- Crises

B. Internal Time Wasters (Could be controlled by ourselves)

- Procrastination
- Attempts to do too much simultaneously (unrealistic time estimates)
- Personal disorganization (cluttered desk and office)
- Poor planning (rely on instincts)
- Unable to say *no*
- Socializing (in person, on phones, through internet chat-room)
- Weak self-discipline (more a dreamer than an achiever)
- Poor delegation (self-centered, distrust of others' abilities, do not know who and how to delegate)
- Perfectionism (trying to make everything, no matter how insignificant, perfect)
- Activities (too many outside activities)
- Indecision (by ourselves)
- Mistakes (by ourselves)

Added to these two lists of most common time wasters could be: too much reading, trash mail, lack of concentration, management by crisis, disorganized supervisor, incompetent subordinates, poor filing system, poor physical fitness, lack of rest or sleep

¹¹ Mayer comments, "The biggest time waster in business today is the inability of people to make decisions. In the corporate world, we all spend hours of time in meetings, but when it comes to making a decision and actually doing something, the only decision that's made is to schedule another meeting." (*Time Management for Dummies*, 107)

(fatigue), lack of simplified procedure for routine matters, responsibility without authority, outside activities, and no personal life goals.¹²

Which of these mentioned time wasters especially jump out on you? Be self-critical because the core of handling time well is the “person” in us. We are unique; our ministry is unique too. We have a unique personality; our ministry has a unique nature too. However, these do not give us the privilege to say, “You are not me, you never will understand what kind of ministry I am having.”

The problem of time wasters exists in real life. We need to give ourselves a chance for improvement in utilizing time more effectively. We can benefit a lot from finding out our own time wasters and from trying to solve them, or at least, minimizing them.

3. The “But-First” Syndrome

The “But-First” syndrome is a common ailment many of us suffer from, but it may not as yet have been diagnosed. If you have been wondering why you have been trying so hard and yet have got nothing or only little things accomplished, you may have unfortunately caught this “But-First” disease.

In the morning when I wake up, I plan to have quality morning devotion. I highly treasure my time with God. (He is on top of my priority list.) I get out of my bed and go to my study.....

But-First, I need to get a cup of coffee.

After having a nice cup of coffee, I head back to my study. Just when I open my Bible and am ready to pray, I notice an empty glass on my desk. That’s distracting. I want

¹² Good references on this subject matter can be derived from: Mackenzie, *The Time Trap*, 3-7; Porter, *The Time of Your Life*, 93-108; Douglass and Douglass, *Manage Your Time, Manage Your Work, Manage Yourself*, 115-161; and William N. Yeomans, *Seven Survival Skills for a Reengineered World* (New York: Dutton Books, 1996), 78-92.

to have a quality devotional time...

But-First, let me take that glass to the kitchen.

I put the glass in the sink and see a note my wife posted last night. There's the pile of letters she wanted me to mail today. I want to have my devotion...

But-First, I shall put those letters in my brief case.

When I open my brief case, I discover a present I bought for my son. I really need to sit down to have my devotion...

But-First, let me give my son a surprise before he wakes up.

As I walk to my son's room, there's the TV remote on the floor. I'll just put it away...

But-First, I have to get back to our bedroom, because my wife is calling me.

Heading back to our bedroom, with the present in one hand and the TV remote in another, I see the daily newspaper sitting on the ground through the window. I just need to put the present in my son's room, put the TV remote away, and see what my wife calls me for...

But-First, I need to read the Headline News of the day.

As I open the front door, our loyal dog waves its tail. A-ha! The dog needs to be fed. Okay, I'll put the present in my kid's room, put the TV remote away, respond to my wife's 'morning call,' read the Headline News.....

But-First, I need to feed the dog.

When I come to realize that I am not yet having my morning devotion, it's about time to get ready for the morning staff meeting. The whole day goes by in a similar manner.

And, when I try to figure out why nothing got done all day, I am baffled, because I know I was busy all day. I realize that I am facing a serious condition, and I need to get some help.....

But-First, I think I'll finish my 'morning devotion'...

Oh, *But-First*, I think I need to check my e-mail.

Does this "But-First" syndrome sound familiar to you? Everything seems like a priority. Too often we get caught up in all there is to do and forget that we're the ones running the show, at least for our personal daily life.¹³

We normally devote our time to the tasks we enjoy instead of the tasks we struggle with, or to trivia instead of to matters of importance. Subconsciously, we may pick up whatever things we notice in a habitual manner. Unless we give an appropriate treatment to this "But-First" syndrome by diligently choosing between the good and the best, we'll always find ourselves in the trouble of running out of time.

Keep in mind, "others may assign us tasks and make demands on us, but we control our own time."¹⁴ To control our own time, we need to first control ourselves. After all, "time management is ultimately an exercise in humanity not power."¹⁵

¹³ Cheryl Richardson, *Take Time for Your Life*, 8-9.

¹⁴ Steve McKinley, John Maxwell, and Greg Asimakoupoulos, *The Time Crunch: What to Do When You Can't Do It All* (Sisters, Ore.: Multnomah, 1993), 65.

¹⁵ White, *Managing Today's Church*, 157.

Chapter Ten

Choice of Planners

“You can be busy or productive. The choice is up to you. My toddler is busy all day, yet not very productive.”¹
~ Lisa Kanarek ~

1. Planners ~ Paper-based and Paperless

One practical way to make the best possible use of our time is to keep track of the tasks we are doing. In so doing, it helps to have the right tool ~ a good time planner. Yet, we should take note that there is no one time planner that suits everyone. We need to find one that best suits ourselves.

There are all kinds of different time planners on the market today. The two main types are paper-based and paperless. The paper-based planner includes wall or desk calendars and notepad planners. The paperless planner includes computer programs, electronic organizers, and Personal Digital Assistants (PDA). Both paper-based and paperless planners are guaranteed to help us get organized. This could be both true and false, for any planner works well only if it is right for us. We can benefit a great deal from it if we master its features and make it the only place to record all our tasks.

To begin with, we need to first figure out which time planner best suits our personal preferences. We can ask ourselves a few questions to find out the answer.

- a) Does our thinking flow more easily when we write or when we type?

¹ Lisa Kanarek, *Everything's Organized* (Franklin Lakes, N.J.: Career Press, 1996), 62.

- b) Do we tend to remember things written on a page or are we more inclined to do a word search for things recorded?
- c) Do we like to flip back and forth between pages in our paper planner or are we more likely to leave the past behind and plan for the present or the days/weeks ahead?
- d) Do we find electronic technology hard to handle or very handy?

If we decide to use a paper-based planner, there are three options to choose from, wall or desk calendar and notepad planner. The wall calendar can act as a good communication device for families and colleagues. The desk calendar works well if we have a simple working environment with simple schedule. Both, however, have the defects of being inconvenient to carry around and to record our to-do list.

The classic time planning tool, a notepad planner, however, is much more convenient to carry around. We can record our to-do list in it. We can customize our system by using the type of paper we need. We also can easily flip back and forth to get certain events or activities in perspective. The one drawback is that, if we lose it, we lose everything in it because there is no easy backup.

On the other hand, if we choose to use a paperless planner, we also have two options to choose from, computer programs and PDA. There are different computer programs having calendars, to-do-list, address lists, and the like. The best known programs are personal information manager (PIM) and contact manager. Again, the key is to select a soft-ware that contains relevant features easy for us to use.

The computerized planning systems best suit people who are at the desk most of the day. With a network-enabled calendar, our assistant can update our schedule and our

colleagues can find out when we are available. The main drawback is, however, we cannot carry it around. Even if it is our laptop, we will have to take the trouble to boot up our computer in order to bring up the right screen just to check the next thing to do, or an appointment, or to enter a to-do item.

Electronic planners, on the other hand, contain features similar to the computer but are easier to carry around. There is a wide variety of these electronic products ranging from the very basic PDA to the miniature computer (handheld PCs, palm-size PCs). A basic PDA provides a calendar, a telephone/address directory, a to-do list, and a memo pad. A miniature computer is actually a 'scaled-down' desktop computer, doing anything a desktop can do.

Electronic planners are small and light-weight, yet they have a huge capacity to hold information. Besides, we can schedule recurring events with only one entry, and update it for the whole year by a touch of a button, instead of writing it multiple times. However, they have drawbacks too. One is that they are comparatively more expensive and more complicated to learn. People may be willing to buy a really good or latest PDA, yet, they may not be willing to spend time to learn all the features. In the end, they may be just using their PDA as an address/telephone directory, a waste in the investment.

Whether we are using (or intend to use) a paper-based planner or a paperless planner, the most important thing is to actually use it (or learn to use it). Do not just buy one and carry it around to impress others. Any planner or planning system is only as effective as the person using it. Also, no one planner is absolutely perfect. Pick one you really like and let it help you achieve what you have planned. Making choices takes time. However, a diligently chosen planner will be worth the time that is spent in choosing it.

No matter what kind of planner we choose, learn its features well and decide how you are going to use it. Practice the “trial and success” game. Be creative and eventually you will become an ‘expert’ in the planner you are using.

2. Planners ~ A Comparison Chart

Paper-based Planner (Notepad)	Paperless Planner (PDA and the like)
<p><u>Advantages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - simple and easy to use, no programs to learn. - able to flip back and forth for an overview. - need no electricity or batteries. - handy to make record, no need to boot-up or log-on. - can customize by using the types of paper we want. - inexpensive. - enjoy having a new planner every year. 	<p><u>Advantages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - more features and larger capacity to use. - can easily group or rearrange data. - easy to make data search. - handy to update recurring events. - calendar data once entered, can be viewed in multiple formats. - can be used for many years. - easy to have back-up. - easy to make changes without mess. - network-enabled calendar allows your assistant to update your schedule or permits your colleagues to know your time of availability. - can easily forward undone tasks to the next day or a future date. - can store notes of different person in his/her individual electronic file. - able to synchronize data between desk-top computer and PDA. - more secure with the need of password to access data.
<p><u>Disadvantages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - either having limited capacity for recording, or becoming too bulky and heavy with additional sheets of information. - there is no easy backup; once you lose 	<p><u>Disadvantages</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - take more time to learn all the features. - take comparatively more time to make or to glance at an entry. - can only view one screen at a time; hard to get an overview.

<p>your planner, you lose all information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - unless your every entry is 'perfect,' any change of data will make it messy or look complicated. - unable to do searches. - poor handwriting may even make ourselves hard to guess what we have written. - have to re-write again (and again) any undone task on the following day or a future date. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - need electricity or batteries. - more expensive (cost price, electricity/ batteries, upgrading, maintenance.) - need to make regular back-up, or else all data will be gone if a crash/glitch happened. - the screen could be too small to accommodate our data. - people with poorer eye-sight may need to squint at the display. - the keyboard could be too tiny to manipulate. - one may be tempted to play with the planner while appearing to work with it.
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3. A Word of Advice

We are living in a high-tech era. "There is no way to escape technology as a constantly developing tool for enhancing time management skills," says Roberta Roesch.² Yet we need to beware that technology can "waste" our time as well if we misuse it, or if we do not use it in a way that is right for us. Lee Silber warns us, "A gizmo can save you time and/or energy, but it can just as easily become a burden."³

In order to avoid having our ministry and life overcomplicated by technology, we need to be very selective. We have to take a good look at the technology in our life to determine what's helping and what's getting in our way.⁴ Added to the questions mentioned earlier, we need to ask ourselves a few more questions to clarify what our needs are, when and how to get and use the technological products.

1. What tasks do I need to do in the ministry?

² Roesch, *Time Management for Busy People*, 77.

³ Silber, *Time Management for the Creative Person*, 151.

⁴ Cook, *Streetwise Time Management*, 151.

2. How am I doing them presently?
3. What do I need or want to change for higher productivity?
4. When and how would the use of hi-tech products help me make the necessary changes for good?
5. What do I expect from the hi-tech product?⁵
6. Are the features easy to learn and handy to use?
7. Does it allow for future upgrading?

Stephen Denton advises, “The primary consideration is ‘Will it work for you?’”⁶ What we actually need is to find something we can adapt easily and use comfortably. This ‘something’ could be solely a paper-based planner, or solely a paperless planner, or a combination of both. Identify our needs, our style, our ministerial life, and go from there. Our quest to find a planner that works for us will thus be more practical.

Having chosen a handy planner, we need to pay close attention to one critical issue. The use of our well chosen planner was supposed to help us to redeem more time. Let us ask ourselves where is the time we saved? Do we use all the time we saved wisely? Time is not spared by a well chosen planner or by multiplying devices only, but rather by discipline. “It is the person, not the mechanism, who will make the difference.”⁷ Remember, the chosen planner can only be our best assistant if we have an “AAA” mindset (see Chapter Seven).

⁵ Julie Morgenstern comments, “There is no reason to buy a PDA that has whistles and bells you don’t need.” See her work, *Time Management from the Inside Out* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2000), 132.

⁶ Roesch, *Time Management for Busy People*, 78.

⁷ Henry Jack Smith, “Time Management in Church Administration,” *Christian Education Journal* 9, no. 3 (1989): 92.

Conclusion

Conclusion

“Time is the only coin you have in life.....
and only you can determine how it will
be spent. Be careful lest you let other
people spend it for you.”¹
~ Carl Sandburg ~

Time obviously has been one of the common causes of problems in the church. If the church enhances a “functionalism” policy, i.e., focusing on programs and activities, the need for more time becomes an ever more critical issue.² Objectives replace faithfulness, and goals override relationship (with God, self, family and others). The situation is even worsened if we overrate our importance and conclude that far too many things can only be done by ourselves.³ Our “quality time” becomes “pressure time” or “tension time.”

All too often, we consent, or are forced, to spend time doing things for which we have no heartfelt reason. “Many of us act from motives that are not entirely benign, on terms that are not always our own.”⁴ “Somehow a situation emerged in which ‘this’ has to be done, and somehow we ended up doing it.”⁵ And, when we do one ministry, we regret not doing the one left over.

Nothing else, perhaps, distinguishes effective pastors as much as their tender loving care of time. (This expresses the pastors’ love for God as well.) As pastors, we

¹ Silber, *Time Management for the Creative Person*, 238.

² Randell, *The Time of Your Life*, 15.

³ Palmer, “Leading from Within,” in *Insights on Leadership*, ed. Spears, 205.

⁴ Palmer, *The Active Life*, 59.

⁵ Ibid, 39.

always feel an obligation to be a good Samaritan. “Yet, we must realize that the need itself, however urgent, is not necessarily a call for us to meet it.”⁶ The value of an action lies not in its size, complexity, and duration but, in its motive ~ love for God.

We should judge our ministerial actions not primarily by the actions we take nor by the results we get, but by the fidelity we have to our own calling and identity. Our actions should correspond to both the reality of our own inward nature and the reality of the situations. “Time is not just external changes, but also our very life, and how we use it reveals who we are.”⁷ Faithful actions do get results.

It is so true that the need for ever-increasing personal productivity and the demands on our time will not go away just because we wish they would. It is, however, equally true that we can do a great deal about our response to these external forces.⁸ We need to restrain ourselves from undertaking too much work than we can go through with calmness of spirit.⁹ Be aware that the “hurrieder” we go, the “behinder” we may get.¹⁰

The past is bygone, the future is yet to come. We learn from the past and prepare for the future. However, “the past lives only in our memories, the future in our imagination; we have only today, this hour, within our grasp.”¹¹ Yes, we only have the

⁶ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 62.

⁷ McConnell, *The Gift of Time*, 22. Aristotle warns us, “We are what we repeatedly do.” See Gleeson’s *The Personal Efficiency Program*, 43.

⁸ Smith, *The Ten Natural Laws of Successful Time and Life Management*, 14.

⁹ John Wesley witnesses, “Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry, because I never undertake more work than I can go through with calmness of spirit.” Quoted in Hummel’s *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 43.

¹⁰ The great pitcher and philosopher Satchel Paige says, “The hurrieder I go, the behinder I get.” See Cook’s *Streetwise Time Management*, 134.

¹¹ Hummel, *Freedom from Tyranny of the Urgent*, 90.

moment we're living right now. That's all. And it's everything.¹² "Today, Tomorrow, Yesterday, with thee are one, and instant aye."¹³ We, therefore, need to live in the present moment as well as we can.

We need to learn to do the right thing. However, before we do the right thing, we have to know the right thing to do. Making such discretion lies on the core of our ministry, the call of the Lord. Our values of ministry and life are inside us. We need to get them out and live by them. "24 Hours A Day Is Enough" ~ for life and ministry, for work and play. God never asks from us what we don't have and what we can't attain.

Maybe it is time for us to re-evaluate our existing mission statement, and translate our values into specific actions. Prioritize our values and specific actions, then, schedule them diligently. Give ourselves time to begin to establish a new routine, but, *avoid pushing too hard and doing too much*.¹⁴ The "new" ("better") way will eventually become the "natural" way of our ministry and life in the future. We should no longer hang on our "what if" mentality and worry about all the details or worse-case scenarios. What we need to do now is to act and react.¹⁵

Dream dreams, but also plant the seed of desire for achievement which will

¹² Cook, *Streetwise Time Management*, 19.

¹³ Quoted in *The Future of Time*, edited by Yaker, Osmond, and Cheek, 485.

¹⁴ Cook warns us, "Old habits are hard to break, and daily life patterns are the most deeply ingrained habits of all." See his work, *Streetwise Time Management*, 326. Lee Silber advises to "do the easiest thing first, then just start making a series of small steps." See his work, *Self-Promotion for the Creative Person*, 47. Edwin C. Bliss also encourages to list the small steps involved in getting the big task done ~ "slice and eat; divide and conquer." See his work, *Getting Things Done: The ABCs of Time Management* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1976), 85.

¹⁵ Silber, *Self-Promotion for the Creative Person*, 48. Friedrich Engels (1820-1895) admonishes, "An ounce of action is worth a ton of theory." Quoted in Levine's *Keeping Life Simple*, 138.

determine the way that life will go, not only its direction but also its attainment.¹⁶ Ask ourselves, “Just what are the good life and ministry to which we can commit ourselves without regrets or misgivings?” Take an immediate step right now, no matter how small, and follow through. Persistence is a vital ingredient of success in life and work. “New Life” is possible if we look to the Lord for strength and grace in our endeavor to better utilize our time.

“This is the beginning of a new day.
God has given me this day to use as I will.
I can waste it or use it for some good purpose,
but what I do with this day is important
because I have exchanged one day of my life for it.
When tomorrow comes, today will be gone forever.
I hope I will not regret the price I paid for it.”¹⁷
~ Author Unknown ~

¹⁶ John K. Williams, *The Wisdom of Your Subconscious Mind* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 1964), 73. Henri Yaker comments, “Men are called to redeem the contents of life in *life*, to salvage life by working in time until the final time, to find meaning by making each hour of life a theo-temporal hour, through decision rather than relying upon a cosmic transformation of nature.” See his work, *The Future of Time*, ed. Yaker, Osmond, and Cheek, 33.

¹⁷ Author unknown. This poem was obtained from a letter written to me by a beloved missionary, Marion Shively.

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