

The Pastor's Stewardship of Time

Ronald K. Heins

[Presented to the Southeastern Wisconsin District,
Metro-South Conference,
January 15, 1979]

Preface

The assignment of this paper came at a time in my ministry when the limitations of time were being keenly felt. Frustration was beginning to rise and all the emotions and syndromes of the harried preacher were fast becoming for me the 20th century's version of the infamous medieval torture, the shrinking room.

The assignment has proven to be quite challenging and a real blessing. Time, or at least its use, touches on every aspect of the pastoral ministry. To address the subject of effective use of time by the parish pastor would necessitate a much longer study than we have time for at one conference.

To limit the paper I have arbitrarily eliminated such pertinent areas as a Scriptural study of the pastoral office, techniques for organizing and enabling members of a congregation to carry out their ministry more effectively, motivating the saints, effective leadership and effective systems for Christian churches. We will also not dwell extensively upon the God-given functions of a Christian congregation, though keeping clear objectives is a major key to the effective use of time in the parish ministry.

Every effort has been made to keep this paper as practical as possible with the hope the listeners will be able to find some insights to help them with what is often a nagging problem: time management.

I. A Pastor's Problem with Time

The pastoral ministry is a diverse, multi-faceted calling. The world classifies it among the professions, we call it our privilege. There is no clock to punch, no human boss to look over our shoulder. The day begins when we schedule it and ends when we end it. Weekends come when we schedule them, not according to the calendar. The amount of time taken for lunch or dinner is as we determine. Sounds nice. And it is.

There are few professional people who have the flexibility built into their work a pastor does. We are able to shift around an amazing amount of work when we want. Not too many fathers have the opportunity in their children's younger pre-school years to see their children several times a day or to baby-sit for their wife while she runs to the grocery store at noon. Time structures are just not as exacting as many other men and women working in the professions.

This is, however, both blessing and curse. It is a blessing in that it provides a maximum opportunity for the pastor to be the master of his time. It is a curse for it faces the pastor with a myriad of never ending decisions as to what to do next and when.

The sheer scope of endeavors yearning to be placed on our agendas has caused many a pastor to ask in a harried moment, "is this really what I want to do with my life?" While there is much flexibility, there never seems to be enough time. A pastor is to be a student of the Scriptures and knowledgeable in the world. He is to teach Christian doctrine to his youth and to adults. He is to be an evangelist, counselor, worship leader, administrator, troubleshooter, preacher, disciplinarian, trainer and equipper of the saints, father, husband, youth leader and synodical worker. His presence is sought at every local and city-wide church event and delegate meeting. Is the pressure real or is it manufactured? Perhaps a little of both.

Several years ago my Board of Elders was doing a Scriptural study of God's expectations of a Christian congregation. In the process we looked at and evaluated every aspect of ministry we were doing as a congregation. Eventually, we had to take a look at what we expected our pastor to do. They asked me to break my work into its constituent parts. Eighteen areas were listed. A copy is found in the addendum.

The Chairman then asked every board member to rank these in priority order and to assign to each category how much time they felt should be allocated to these activities in the course of a week. This same

information was also asked of all the other officers of the congregation. The results were very revealing and point to one of the real pressures.

Among the twenty eight elected officers of our congregation there was general consensus on the priority listing of only two functions, "worship" and "family obligations". This was very gratifying. Certainly worship and family are the God-given priorities for a pastor. To have our leaders acknowledge this, was a gift of God. The trouble came on the other sixteen areas of endeavor. On all other categories the priority ranking averaged between six and thirteen with individual rankings running the entire range from two-eighteen under most categories. In other words, practically every officer had differing expectations of his pastor. This points to one of the real pressures, the hidden agendas. People expect us to live up to their expectations and will exert subtle pressures to assist us along the way. We have not as congregations and pastors prioritized our public ministry.

The time portion was also interesting. Totals ran from a low of fifty-eight hours to a high of an hundred and three with the average at seventy-four. Leslie B. Flynn in his book "How to Save Time in the Ministry" agrees the schedule of hours is heavy.

Few occupations demand so many hours per week of work as does the ministry. Surveys by Fortune magazine and American Management Association show that many top-notch executives work from fifty to sixty hours a week. A poll of clergymen revealed the average minister puts in more than seventy hours every week. Some work eighty hours.¹

Adjusting to this type of life may be difficult for many men because of their cultural background. William Hulme, in discussing the pastor's problems with time, notes

...the minister is more likely to have come from a clerical or working-class family than a professional or executive family, and therefore is constantly resisting his busyness on the basis of the eight-hour workday. In other words he fights the professional man's work schedule because he unconsciously identifies with the work hours of the run-of-the-mill employee.²

In other words, many men may find themselves in a conscious or unconscious pressure-by-comparison which evokes the all too well known self-pity.

Beyond the scope, the hidden agendas, the long hours is the reality of pastoral ministry in the late 20th century. The culture of our nation has changed from a pseudo-Christian morality and ethic to pagan. The battering God's people are taking in this hodge-podge of competing life philosophies is extraordinary. When the Lord said it would be only those who endure who would be saved, He was not underestimating. The breakdown of the family structure has taken away much of the help and support, both spiritual and emotional, people used to find in their homes and relatives. The openness of people in wanting to talk about their problems and the acceptability of seeking outside help has grown by leaps and bounds. The pastor is often the first line of contact.

The telephone, a 20th century tool in growing use, has a very nauseating way of ringing at the wrong time and all too often. People walk in to say hello and then unload for an hour. Hospitals fill with your parishioners, Minnie broke her hip, Aunt Mabel is killing herself with alcohol, "my wife is running around Pastor," "Cindy's spaced out on drugs. She is not reacting normally. What shall I do?", "malignant." These are the voices of God's people, hurt, mixed up, in trouble. These are the lambs whom we count it a privilege to serve with the healing Gospel.

To those lambs the Lord has added the sheep that are not yet in the fold. Our communities, despite some renewed interest in religion, continue to become less and less churched. The confusion of voices among the churches of the Christian community raises a strong need for confessional witness. Those who are given much, are given much to give.

Combine all these together at any given point and the shepherd soon finds himself crying out to God, have mercy upon me. Hour piles upon hour, sufficient sleep is not always available, exhaustion sets in, guilt

¹ Leslie B. Flynn, How to Save Time in the Ministry, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975), p. 7.

² William E. Hulme, Your Pastor's Problems, (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966), p.138.

increases as the known needs grow beyond our ability to reach them and a certain numbness sets in. We join in the lament of one brother who said, "I'm so busy doing all the things that have to be done I can't get around to the things that should be done." Leslie B. Flynn describes the results this way,

The exhausting marathon of endless, diverse duties, performed against the squeeze of dwindling time, damages like driving a car with the emergency brake on, or frustrates like racing the engine with the car in neutral—plenty of buzzing but no progress. The strain will inevitably show as it did on one nervous executive who, asking his secretary where his pencil was and told it was behind his ears snapped, "Don't you know I'm a busy man? Which ear?"³

It is this problem the program committee asked me to address.

II. Scriptural Aids and Insights

The advice of St. Paul to "be imitators of God" (Eph. 5:1), directs our attention to other ministries. The classic solution offered to Moses by Jethro, certainly provided relief for the harried Moses. Take note of what Jethro suggested (Exodus 18). In effect, he said if you have too much to do and important things are not getting done, break the problem down into its constituent parts, set tasks in priority order in terms of their level of importance, train other competent people to handle the lesser tasks and you take on only the most difficult. And so a system that placed officials over "thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens," was instituted. The result? Verse 23: "You will be able to stand the strain, and the people will go home satisfied."

The early disciples soon found they had more than they could handle and some widows were being neglected. Acts 6 describes the solution. They chose seven men to carry out certain functions so the disciples could give their "attention to prayer and the ministry of the word" (Acts 6:4).

In both cases we see training and delegating. The Acts section, however, adds another element. Note the reason for the delegation—to focus on the ministry of the Word. An important principle of time management is to keep our purposes, our objectives, our top priority items constantly before us and not let any other endeavor, be it ever so good or attractive in itself, divert us from our primary purposes.

The ministry of Jesus reflects that kind of single-mindedness. He told His mother in the temple He needed to be about His Father's business. He told His disciples He had come to do the Will of His Father. Over and over again the Scriptures tell of His actions fulfilling its prophecies. God had given Jesus an objective to accomplish. Every single thing He did, He did in such a way it contributed to His mission. At times this made no sense to the disciples. When Lazarus was ill and dying, Jesus' response was determined by His goals. It also seemed to the disciples to be ill-advised to go to Jerusalem after raising Lazarus, He went. He sublimated all personal desires to His purpose. He lived to do the will of His Father—to save souls. Oh, there were other agendas. The disciples and leaders were always looking for Him to take political action. Individuals crowded to Him with all kinds of expectations, many left disappointed. The life of Jesus, what He did, how He did it and when He did it were determined by constant consciousness of what He was trying to accomplish—His Father's objective. "Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5), Paul tells us. "As long as it is day, we must do the work of Him who sent me" (John 9:4). (emphasis mine)

Despite this single-mindedness, we see Jesus engaging in almost all the activities of a normal parish pastor. He find Him taking time for prayer, for worship, for meditation. He spent time with family and friends relaxing. He took time to teach the disciples, to meet individual needs, to preach the Word. All the various tasks we have, He had, and much more. Yet He could say in His high priestly prayer, "I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do" (John 17:4). If Jesus could say His ministry was complete in three and a half years, maybe we need to take a different look at ours. A closer look at His prayer does not imply there was no more work to do, but simply He had done all that for which the Father had sent Him.

The writer of Ecclesiastes starts his third chapter with this remarkable statement, "There is a time for everything and a season for every activity under heaven." "A time for everything"—for everything God wants

³ Flynn, p. 8.

us to do in the lifetime He gives us. Two implications for our problem here: 1) we may be trying to do more than God intends for us to do; and/or 2) we may not be managing well the time He gives us.

As we look at these other ministries we are again aware that "God is not a God of confusion" (I Cor. 14:33). The ministries of Moses, Jesus and the disciples were well planned, had clear objectives, and carried out those objectives. St. Paul, no less. God gave Paul an objective: to evangelize and disciple the Gentiles. To fulfill that objective Paul devised a plan. He went to the cities, started work at the synagogue, and then carried it out into the community. Leadership groups were established. An overseer such as Timothy was often left in charge. He set the itinerary. God, at times, changed Paul's plans. So did Paul. Plans are always in need of update. God directs. We note the Lord blessed this planned ministry.

God encourages us to plan, to count the costs in advance (Luke 14:28-30). He asks us to make the most of every opportunity (Eph. 5:15-16). He wants us to exert control over our lives by the power of His Spirit. A prominent characteristic of an overseer is to be "self-controlled" (I Tim. 3:2). God wants us to manage our families and His Church well (I Tim. 3:4-5). We are to be good stewards (Matthew 25:14-30). The time we have is not our own. Management of time for the Christian becomes management of His time.

Paul addressed the need to a purposeful, precisely directed and disciplined life when he said, "Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize" (I Cor. 9:24-27). If we are to get the most out of our days, we will need to go into strict training and discipline ourselves so our running is not an aimless forage over a paper covered desk but a ministry structured to accomplish God's purposes in our lives and through our labors.

III. Time Management

Many of these same elements found in the ministries of Scripture are basic to the suggestions of individuals who have wrestled with the issue of time effectiveness.

Basic to an understanding of time is its quantity. No one has any more time or any less time than anyone else. To each of us God has given 1,440 minutes in every day, 168 hours per week. While no one seems to have enough time, everyone has all the time there is. What we do with the time we have, how effectively we manage that time, is the key.

For the Christian three relationships are integrally linked in time management: my relationship with my God, my relationship with the community of believers, the Church, and my relationship to the "work" of Christ. A balanced management of time will recognize each relationship is interdependent. If a pastor spends all his time on the "work" of Christ and neglects his own relationship with Christ, he will soon be an empty well. If he separates the "work" of Christ from the people of Christ, he will soon be running programs for the sake of running programs and accomplishing little of what God wants done. Engstrom and MacKenzie warn of the resultant confusion.

For a church, this danger can be seen in the providing of "better buildings and equipment, better materials, better methods, and improved leadership for its work without a clear-cut understanding of what it is trying to accomplish."⁴

What is true for the church is true for the preacher. It is easy to become so wrapped up in the doing of the ministry that we never stop to ask ourselves what it is we are trying to accomplish with God's time and talent. If my response to the call for carefully thought out purposes and plans is "I'm trying to get these shut-in calls made, see Aunt Minnie, get my sermon theme so the secretary can type the bulletin and find something for a program for Ladies Aid," I've fallen into the trap.

⁴ Ted Engstrom and Alec MacKenzie, Managing Your Time, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967), p. 111.

There is a big difference between activity and accomplishment. The two are really little related. Killing oneself in feverish activity is certainly to no one's advantage, certainly not the Kingdom's. One definition of a fanatic is "one who redoubles his efforts once he has lost sight of his goal." "Work smarter, not harder" is the oft repeated by-line for the time management people.

To work smarter one has to first figure out in specific terms what one is trying to accomplish. What are the objectives of my ministry in this congregation? What am I really trying to accomplish under God? What is being accomplished? To answer these questions realistically might require a study of what we are putting our time to now. A week long project given the confirmation children to keep track of how they use every hour of every day for one week is very revealing to pastor, student and parents. We can profit too. How we spend our time, like how we spend our money is a fairly accurate barometer of where our priorities really are.

Once we have established what we are trying to accomplish, we can start asking what it is God would have us accomplish. Then we can evaluate the present by asking how many of the things we are currently spending our time on are really helping us to reach the purposes we have established.

Prof. Theodore Graebner in a gem of a little book, "The Pastor as Student and Literary Worker," points out that when there is no plan, no specific purposes to ministry, the daily work of the pastor will bob back and forth between tasks important and unimportant. The day will be filled with constant interruptions and taken up by such infinitesimal tasks as cleaning a pipe, straightening the desk, opening the mail and studying all the latest flyers. One can, he points out, put in a very strenuous ministry for five years, ten years, fifteen years, but if there is no system, no purpose, the pastor will not have gained in assets that will add to his usefulness during the next five years. Graebner asks of the pastor,

Has he filled a reservoir, or must he continue to lay a pipe-line every week? Can he point to a single field of theological knowledge and say: "I have built upon the basis of my seminary preparation"? Has he attained to a more comprehensive knowledge of Scripture? Has he anything to show in the way of extracts, notes, index-references, commensurate with the opportunity of five long years?⁵

What he says for the intellectual and spiritual needs of a pastor is true for his entire ministry of time. There needs to be conscious purpose if there is to be good management of time.

Once we have laid out what it is we are now going to try to accomplish, it is easier to handle the years, months, weeks, days, hours and minutes. Now we can take all the things we are spending our time on and examine them critically. At this point we would have two lists, one of what we are doing and one of what needs to be done in order to reach our purposes. Don't try to do this in your head. Nothing will ever happen. Write it down.

Prioritize! Rank all activities by priority. Alan Lakein suggests three priority lists, the A's, the B's and the C's. The A's are those functions that are critical to our goals. Sermon research and writing would hopefully be an "A" priority. "B's" are those things that are important but not critical. "C's" are those activities or functions that yield little value in terms of our purposes. Then start with the A's. Normally, he claims,

If all items are arranged in order of value, 80 percent of the value would come from only 20 percent of the items, while the remaining 20 percent of the value would come from 80 percent of the items.⁶

People who claim they are overwhelmed in terms of time have not learned to be comfortable with not doing items in the C category. By inference he makes a very solid point. It is very easy to spend time neatening one's desk, taking care of other trivia and accomplishing nothing of major significance. We matriculate to the C category items because they are most easily accomplished, reveal the fact of accomplishment most quickly and still give us a sense of having done something. The truth of the matter is we may be avoiding the most important work. Important work tends to be avoided because by its very nature it cannot always be performed well. They are new, untried, unknown and uncertain many times. Doing them means taking risks: risks with relationships,

⁵ Theodore Graebner, *The Pastor as Student and Literary Worker*, (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925), p. 9.

⁶ Alan Lakein, *How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life*, (New York: Signet Book, New American Library, 1973), p. 71.

risks all the way down the line. But it is just these tough things, when done, that leave us the greatest sense of accomplishment and achieve the most.

Many men have found it useful to prioritize their activity even more than once in a day. Interruptions, a death and any other series of unavoidable events could make the next thing you do differ from what you had intended. When there is a class to be taught tonight and four hours has just been taken up in emergency counseling, you're A,1 priority may change from sermon research to class preparation. At any change in direction or new point in a day, and especially when we are uncertain what to do next, ask the Lakein question, "What is the best use of my time right now?" Ask it when you think you are procrastinating, ask it often. The point is to discipline ourselves to do the most important tasks first, not the easiest or the most convenient.

What we are really talking about is consciously planned, purposeful, daily living. Even as Jesus lived His life, Paul his, Moses his, so the Christian his. Since Christ is at the center of all we do, or at least should be, we ought to stop often and ask ourselves if we are using God's time in the best possible way given the endeavors He has set before us. To do so we will have to determine what it is in God's Kingdom that needs to be done by us or through us in the stations God has placed us, devise a plan to get there, prioritize the elements of the plan and follow the priorities. Good time use is planning to use our time effectively for what God wants us to be doing.

Planning our time use is not something most of us come by naturally. But then planning our family budgets didn't come naturally either until we found we didn't have enough to cover all our desires. Planning is contrary to the flesh. The flesh is lazy and would just as soon not be structured. Satan isn't a particular enthusiast of pastor's effectiveness either. If he can keep us spending significant amounts of time on C category items, he wins. Take our reading habits. Sinful flesh being what it is, we will tend to gravitate to the lowest common denominator. We will tend to do that reading which is easiest, which takes the least amount of mental energy. If newspaper reading, magazine reading, television watching is taking up an hour a day on the average, you should be aware that you are spending seven hours of the week, three hundred sixty five hours of a year or the equivalent of forty-five eight hour work days, the equivalent of nine normal weeks—almost two months of productive days in the course of a year. Is it worth that much time?

Without planning, we can fall into the newspaper, TV, magazine habit just as easily as we can become the errand boy of the congregation. And without personal discipline, all the planning in the world is valueless. The story is told about a farmer who told his wife as he left the door in the morning he was going to plow the back forty today. He started early to change the oil in the tractor. He discovered he needed more oil so he went to the shop to get it. On the way he noticed the pigs weren't fed. He went to the corn crib, where he found some sacks. That reminded him the potatoes were sprouting. He started for the potato pit. As he passed the woodpile he remembered his wife wanted wood in the house. As he picked up a few sticks, ...when evening arrived, the back forty wasn't plowed, neither was much else. Managing yourself prevents you from becoming so distracted by other things that you do not accomplish what you set out to accomplish originally.

Time is but a measurement – a dimension. Thus it, per se, can scarcely be our problem. When we look into the matter of time and its management all roads ultimately lead back to the management of ourselves.⁷

Indecision is the greatest waster of time. When we are not planning our time use, everyone else will. When we don't make the decisions, others will. The ten minutes spent planning the next day at the end of the previous day, will save hours. Take a moment and write down the things to be accomplished, then prioritize them. Attached to this essay are two types of daily planners. Something like this is helpful to some. The keys are to write it down, prioritize, and starting at the A,1's, execute.

Part of planning is goal setting. Example: God wants His people to not forsake their gathering together for worship. Objective: To increase the frequency with which the people of my congregation worship. Goal: To increase the percentage of worship attendance by two percent of the soul membership in each of the next five

⁷ Ted W. Engstrom and Edward R. Dayton, The Art of Management for Christian Leaders, (Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1976), p. 211.

years. Strategy is how we go about reaching the goals. By having goals, we make our overall purposes specific, timed and able to be measured. It keeps our eyes off the problems of the present (negative things) and focuses our attention and efforts on future possibilities.

For Christian pastors God's Word sets the objectives. Most of the detail for the goals and strategy He leaves to us. He told us to disciple the world and gave us the Word. The rest we work out. We propose, He disposes. Plans will always be changing, goals will need regular revision. New insights and greater than expected blessings can make them obsolete. Without plans though, it is hard, if not almost impossible to be good stewards of God's gifts. A person without goals will tend to find little to celebrate. "No wind blows in favor of the ship that has no port of destination" (Montaigne). Without goals we cannot set priorities, we cannot quickly decide how to use our time, we are like a man driving down the road without the foggiest idea of why we are on this road going in this direction. That even happens once in awhile when you do have goals, witness the author last week going west on I-94 while trying to get to St. Mary's.

Time management requires long range planning, clear objectives, specific goals and a flexible strategy to carry them out. The key ingredient is self discipline. Discipline to develop and maintain current plans. Discipline to execute the plans developed.

IV. Friends and Enemies

As with any endeavor, there are friends and enemies, the good guys and the bad, so with the stewardship of time. Charles Reimnitz lists the following as "The Dirty Dozen: Time Wasters for Clergymen."

1. Personal disorganization
2. Problems with delegation
3. Interruptions
4. Indecision and procrastination
5. Socializing
6. Junk mail and outside reading
7. Lack of planning
8. Television
9. Meetings
10. Family problems and family errands
11. Traveling time and car problems
12. Fatigue⁸

To the list I would add, saying "yes" too often to the goals of others involving you, and failure to grow spiritually and theologically. Watch out for these, they are nickel and dimers that total significant hours in the course of a year. They often represent time that did not yield satisfaction and growth both for you and for God's Kingdom.

Enough of the enemies, let's talk about friends. The following is a list in paragraph form of practical suggestions to save time. They are offered with the hope that some of them will help you in your ministry as some of them have proven in mine.

Perhaps the easiest time saver of all is the ever present friendly calendar. Most of us keep some type of calendar for at least our daily appointments. Want time for study, for family, for wife, for the A,1's of your ministry, calendarize them and stick to them. Some of us have tried to do it and then caved in. Somehow we can schedule appointments with parishioners and keep them, but not with ourselves or our family. This is a mistake. We are separating the work of Christ, from Christ and His children. One of the things our Father has put on our agendas is to be an example to the flock and a top notch manager of our homes and our bodies. We cannot justify disobeying God on the basis we are doing His will. Set your priorities, calendarize them, that's right

⁸ Edward R. Dayton and Ted W. Engstrom, Strategy for Living, (Glendale, California: A Regal Publication, 1976), p. 172.

write them in, and don't be so quick to assume the member wanting to talk to you has more urgent business than what is on your calendar. Learn to separate out the true emergencies by asking a few key questions. Maybe five minutes on the phone will save a house call. Three types of calendars are useful, a yearly to keep major efforts from overlapping, a monthly to keep on top of the sweep of your planning as strategy is carried out and a daily to plan the hours and minutes. Go home and fill your calendar with time for work, and time for play, time for planning and time for family, but fill it yourself or someone else will.

Another big time saver is delegation. The Lord calls upon pastors and teachers to be equippers of the saints. When our Lord was carrying out His ministry on earth, one of the first things He did was choose some disciples to train. We forget He sent out the seventy to preach the Gospel. How many of our members have we sent out, how many are in training? Statistics are not the point, delegation is. Dwight L. Moody's comment is a classic, "Put ten men to work rather than do the work of ten men!" One of our first questions should be, "what am I doing that someone else can do just as well, if not better?" The Scriptures reveal every Christian has gifts to contribute and the ministry belongs to all. If you don't have a secretary, find one, part time, volunteer, whatever. The bookwork of the ministry is a waste of the pastor's time. Annual statistical reports can be put together by others, so can permanent records. And secretaries are only the beginning of the skills God has supplied to our congregations. When we are not delegating and training people for future delegation, we are robbing them of their ministry and placing a low value on our own time. If you don't value your time, others won't either and you will tend to devalue theirs also.

Save time by taking time off. We have all said it so often. "The Lord rested after the creation. Jesus went off to the mountain to pray." The servant is not greater than his Master. Spurgeon, an outstanding Christian who accomplished much wrote:

Fishermen must mend their nets, and we must every now and then repair our mental waste and set our machinery in order for future service. To tug the oar from day to day, like a galley slave who knows no holidays, suits not mortal men. Millstreams go on and on for ever, but we must have our pauses and our intervals. Who can help being out of breath when the race is continued without intermission? Even beasts of burden must be turned out to grass occasionally; the very sea pauses at ebb and flood; earth keeps the sabbath of the wintry months; and man, even when exalted to be God's ambassador, must rest or faint; must trim his lamp or let it burn low; must recruit his vigor or grow prematurely old.⁹

Some pastors claim facetiously to never rest because Satan never rests. Since when do we take our example from Satan? A rest need not be doing nothing, rather doing something different. A parishioner once remarked to me "Pastor, if that's the kind of sermon you are going to preach when you come back from vacation, take a vacation a little more often." Wonder if he is trying to tell me something?

Save time with purposeful reading and study. Start with and give top billing to Scripture. Biblical ignorance has caused many a pastor to wrestle over a problem God has already answered. We castigate our parishioners for their lack of Bible knowledge, when given the skills with which we have been equipped, we often prove even more negligent than they. A sound and growing knowledge of God's Word will also enable us to more quickly plan our efforts and more decisively and effectively deal with our problems and the problems of our people. Being a student of the Word is an A,1 on God's agenda for us. We should read and study purposefully. If there is no reason for what we are reading; if it does not further our understanding of our world nor deepen our intellect; if it does not advance us in the tools we need to carry out our calling; if it does not stretch and test the fiber of our minds, we ought to question its right to our time unless it is for rest and recreation. Graebner speaks practically of the results of poor work habits.

Now, let us say, there is trouble in the congregation. This means that he will not go to sleep when he retires. He is fagged out as it is. His mind keeps on working, seeking a solution to a pastoral problem. And this, night after night. Why? Because he feels himself unable to cope with a certain situation. Why? Because he either lacks certain knowledge of wise, Scriptural procedure, or because his mind is not

⁹ Flynn, p. 80.

powerful enough to enter into the intricacies of the problem. And why is this? Because through unwise habits of work he has failed to gather such information and to build up the fiber of his mind for the strain of sustained effort.¹⁰

Edward Dayton summarizes the point.

The day we stop learning new things, we're in trouble. However, most of us find that learning takes more time than we seem to have available. This is probably because we have not clearly related learning to our goals. But there are some things we can do to reduce the time it takes to learn to accomplish your goals.

1. Decide what you need to learn to accomplish your goals.
2. Find key publications that relate to your...goals and stick to them. Don't read at random.
3. Have a book reading plan that relates to your goals.
4. Develop reading styles. A speed reading course can be very useful.
5. Plan short learning experiences each year.
6. Learn from living. Is your life 20 years of the same experience repeated 20 times, or 20 years of progressive building into your life and into the lives of others?¹¹

Save time by planning your meetings rather than planning to meet. First of all meetings of a congregation, especially the business end of congregational life, ought to be grouped into one day each week or one day each month. If stewardship meets on the first Monday of the month, Education on the second Tuesday and so on throughout the month, we will never have consecutive nights for Bible study, Adult classes, leadership training and other needful functions. Back to the original point. Standing committees and boards of a congregation will tend to meet for the sake of meeting. After all, it is the second Tuesday of the month. To meet for the sake of meeting is a waste of everyone's time. Plan meetings in advance. If there is nothing to be accomplished, cancel. Meetings need to have a specific purpose or they will tend to be an endless drivel of trite sayings that accomplishes little in the allotted time. We've structured all our committee work to be done in the hour and a half before the boards meet. Having this fixed time limit we have found also helps keep meetings on track. Attached to this essay is a meeting planning form. It could be a time saver.

Save time by knowing yourself. Some of us do our best work late in the day, others early. Use your most energetic times for the creative tasks and important problem-solving activities. Try to make your telephone calls, check your mail, plan your conferences and all other less demanding tasks for your down times.

Save time by controlling your environment. When is the last time you took a good look at the conditions under which you are trying to carry out your work? Are the things you use most often, closest to your desk? Is your working office located out of the line of traffic for family and others? How about sound levels? Studies have shown that noise has a detrimental effect on work output. Is your chair comfortable and place of work conducive to work? If you can't correct the environment, change it. Maybe you need to retreat to the local library for creative time. If you have a secretary, have her answer the phone. Plan time for callbacks on non-emergency business. When your time is scheduled by you, she can help keep you on your schedule. Secretaries, by the way, can be trained to handle almost 90 percent of all incoming phone traffic.

Save time by having a communication center for your officers and committees. Most communications between boards and committees are not emergency communiqués, nor are yours to them. Why struggle to find someone home by phone or by visit when you can have a mailbox right outside your office for every committee, every organization, every person with whom there is need for regular communication.

Save time by using minutes. We sometimes assume there will be or should be relatively large blocks of time to accomplish some relatively large tasks. If we are going to move ahead on our A,1's we are going to have to learn to make use of the five minutes, ten minutes, fifteen minutes meaningfully. These are the times before supper, right before a meeting, while we are waiting for someone to come in, or waiting ourselves in a doctor's office or wherever. Prof. Meilahn Zahn, now retired from Dr. Martin Luther College, was my music professor at

¹⁰ Graebner, p.9.

¹¹ Edward R. Dayton, Tools for Time Management, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House. 1977), pp. 97-98.

Michigan Lutheran Seminary. He was carrying such a tremendous load during one period while I was there, I just stood in awe of how one human being could find the time to do so much. So I asked. His answer? By using minutes. Haven't always used it, but have never forgotten it. The "I don't have time for that now" is always the first step toward accomplishing your C level efforts before the A,1's.

Save time by making lists. Writing out lists is a quicky planner that saves time. Lists assume your memory is not one hundred percent. They assume you need a little thought before you act and when prioritized can keep us working on our A,1's even after interruptions. They also prevent us from having to make two trips to the Publishing House, when one would have been enough. The job should have been delegated in the first place. Lists, like goals, should be thoughtfully made. Too much on a "To Do" list ends up with frustration and little done.

Save time by asking. Pride is a time waster. There is little reason for us to have to invent the same wheel over and over again, If you are working on a problem, spend some time finding out if someone else has worked on it and with what results. Maybe we can't use the same size wheel, but a little smaller round thing may be just what we need to move our wagon, Among the brethren there is an unending supply of really terrific ideas. A long standing prayer has been to find a way we, as pastors, can more effectively share our failures and blessings, our labors and insights. We are God's gift to each other and He has given different gifts to each. Would we could more effectively use them.

Save time by training your people to make appointments. It allows you to plan your time and they theirs.

Save time by having the equipment to do the job. A copy machine is a truly cost effective piece of equipment. So is a good mimeo and other office equipment, whether you use them or not. If you have a secretary, use a dictating machine for your correspondence and memos.

Save time by keeping yourself physically fit. Physical exercise, diet and the general health concerns of the body are not just secular concerns. To sustain the vigorous and exhaustive pace of the ministry we need to heed the training advice of Paul and build the stamina required for good physical and emotional health. When we are physically run down, it is difficult to see tasks to completion, maintain planning, initiate and carry out our ministries.

This list of helpful hints from the files of others could go on and on. You have many you have learned by experience. I hope you will share them. (Maybe our conferences should have a sharing time as part of our agendas.) The principles of good time management as seen in Scripture and through the eyes of human experience have only been touched in these few short pages. I hope they will prove useful.

Permit me to make some end notes. Overload is something we do to ourselves, not something God or our congregation does to us. We do our calling an injustice when we fall into the habit of compulsive overwork. God has given us all the time we need for His agenda. It is up to us to use it well. Effective time use is a skill that can be and should be acquired by all Christians, certainly the examples to the flocks. When we run out of time for family, study, and other essentials, we better look first at our time management and self discipline rather than complain we have too much to do.

Next – don't try to adopt for your ministry all, or many, of these suggestions all at once. It will go the way of New Year resolutions because of poor planning. Start with one or two and work out.

Seek effectiveness rather than efficiency. As soon as we concentrate on being efficient we confuse goal and means. If we are not in control of our agendas, we are not in control of ourselves and if we are not in control of ourselves, we are not in control of our time, and if we are not in control of ourselves or our time we are a) not utilizing the power of Christ to direct our lives; b) exerting a lower level of stewardship of gifts given than we are able. "Live life then, with a due sense of responsibility, not as men who do not know the meaning and purpose of life but as those who do. Make the best use of your time, despite all the difficulties of these days" (Eph. 5:15-16 Phillips).

Bibliography

- Adams, Jay E. The Pastoral Life. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974.
- Bauer, Walter. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957.
- Bible - New international Version. New Jersey: New York International Bible Society, 1973.
- Bible - King James Version
- Dayton, Edward R. Tools for Time Management. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977.
- Dayton, Edward R. and Engstrom, Ted W. Strategy for Living. Glendale, California: A Regal Publication, 1976.
- Engstrom, Ted W. and Dayton, Edward R. The Art of Management for Christian Leaders. Waco, Texas: Word Books, 1976.
- Engstrom, Ted W. and MacKenzie, Alec. Managing Your Time. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1967.
- Flynn, Leslie B. How to Save Time in the Ministry. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1975.
- Graebner, Theodore. The Pastor as Student and Literary Worker. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1925.
- Hulme, William E. Your Pastor's Problems. Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1966.
- Lakein, Alan. How to Get Control of Your Time and Your Life. New York: Signet Book, New American Library, 1973.
- , Managing Your Time. A MARC Management Seminar Workbook. World Vision, Inc.
- Shepp, Charles W. Time for All Things. Nashville: Abingdon Press. 1962.
- Stanton, Sybil S. (ed.) The Ministry of Management. Second edition. 1972.

Further Resource Materials

- Alexander, John W. Managing Our Work. Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1972.
- Bormann, Ernest and Nancy. Effective Committees and Groups in the Church. Minneapolis: Augsburg Press, 1973.
- Deegan, James Jr. The Priest as Manager. St. Paul: Bruce Publishing Company, 1969.
- Drucker, Peter F. Management: Tasks, Responsibilities, Practices. New York: Harper and Row, 1974.
- Laird, Donald A. The Technique of Getting Things Done. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947.
- MacKenzie, Alec. The Time Trap: Managing Your Way Out. New York: American Management Association, 1972.
- Mager, Robert. Goal Analysis. Belmont, CA: Fearon Publishers, Inc., 1972.
- McGavran, Donald and Arn, Win. How to Grow a Church. Glendale, CA: Regal, 1973.
- McGavran, Donald and Arn, Win. Ten Steps for Church Growth. New York: Harper and Row.
- Schaller, Lyle E. Parish Planning. Nashville: Abingdon, 1971.
- Schaller, Lyle E. The Decision-Makers: How to Improve the Quality of Decision Making in the Churches. Nashville: Abingdon, 1974.
- Schaller, Lyle E. The Change Agent. Nashville: Abingdon, 1972.

Seminars

- World Vision International, 919 W. Huntington Dr., Monrovia, CA 91016. Sponsors Managing Your Time seminars.
- William Gast and Associates, 5230 Burgess Road, Colorado Springs, CO 80908. Offers seminars on administrative systems for churches.
- Parish Leadership Seminars, Inc., 636 Yosemite Dr., Indianapolis, IN 46217. – by Rev. Donald A. Abdon. Organizing Around the Great Commission and Training and Equipping the Saints, 1975.

TIME AND PRIORITY STUDY SHEET

TIME	ORDER OF PRIORITY	
		<u>SHUT IN VISITS</u> House calls made to bring devotions and the Lord's Supper to those members who are unable to attend Worship.
		<u>INSTRUCTION OF CONFIRMANDS</u> Preparation, planning and/or teaching the confirmation classes (adult and children).
		<u>TEACHING</u> Preparation, planning and/or teaching Sunday School staff, Adult Bible Classes, continued spiritual growth of staff, etc.
		<u>ADMINISTRATION</u> Serving as "executive secretary" to congregation by working with committees and Boards in planning and implementing the immediate, short and long range efforts of the congregation to carry out the Lord's work here at St. John's.
		<u>PERSONAL STUDIES</u> Time allocated to the continued spiritual growth of your pastor to deepen his understanding of God's truths and to learn skills and practical information needed to carry out a knowledgeable ministry.
		<u>TRAINING MEMBERS FOR SERVICE</u> The preparation, planning and teaching of members for service to the church i.e. Visiting Elders, Evangelism, etc.
		<u>PRESENCE AT GROUP MEETINGS</u> Altar Guild, Ladies Aid, Pioneers, LWMS Circles, etc.
		<u>VISITING THE SICK</u> Regular calls on those who are hospitalized.
		<u>PERSONAL CONSULTATIONS</u> Lending guidance, support and/or counseling to individuals with personal and spiritual problems, to couples planning to be married, to families in difficulties, etc.
		<u>EVANGELISM VISITS</u> Personally making calls on prospective new members and bringing Christ to those who do not know Him as their Savior.
		<u>NEWSLETTER/CALENDAR</u> Keeping the congregation informed of the work being done in the congregation & lending spiritual guidance to topics of concern.
		<u>WORSHIP (SUNDAY/SPECIAL)</u> The preparation of sermons, bulletins, selection of hymns, writing special liturgies and propers, etc., for public worship.
		<u>HELPING YOUTH (15-30)</u> Planning, leading, involving, teaching and counseling to meet the special needs of our young people after confirmation.
		<u>PRESENCE AT CONGREGATIONAL ACTIVITIES</u> Being present at athletic games, fellowship hour, ice cream socials, special parties, etc.
		<u>VISITING ERRING AND DELINQUENT MEMBERS</u> Making house calls on those who have become negligent of the means of grace or who have fallen into spiritual difficulty but have not sought help.
		<u>VISITING MEMBERS</u> Making periodic house calls on members for social, spiritual and general concerns.
		<u>FULFILLING RESPONSIBILITIES TO THE CHURCH AT LARGE</u> Serving on Synodical, Federation, etc. committees and Boards – writing for periodicals – helping and assisting the work of the Synod.
		<u>FAMILY OBLIGATIONS</u> Providing for the spiritual growth and personal development of my family, being part of and doing things with and for my family's welfare.

DAILY WORK SHEET

Day _____ Date _____

(In this space list all the work you envision for a given day)

Begin with the hardest tasks

DAILY TIME INVENTORY SCHEDULE

WORK I MUST DO TODAY	WORK I SHOULD DO IF I HAVE THE TIME	WORK I CAN NEGLECT