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# Practical Time Management Tips for Pastors

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## *#1 – Who says you have to do that?*

Time management begins with obligation elimination. Some of the stress-inducing items on your calendar may not need to be there in the first place. Does anything really hang in the balance for that meeting or task? What would happen if it just went away?

## *#2 – First things first.*

The principle of first fruits applies to more than money. Do the most important thing you need to do early in the day. And do the most important tasks of the week on Monday or Tuesday.

## *#3 – Choose a few tools and master them.*

There is no perfect app or productivity system, so stop looking. Choose something that works fine and then perfect it. You don't have to be on the latest, greatest app if sticky notes work just fine. When you do choose the one tech tool that works for you, invest in truly learning the capabilities.

## *#4 – It's okay to say “no” or “not now”.*

Every opportunity that comes your way is not an obligation. Try saying this: “I don't have the time to do a great job on that right now, but let me put you in touch with someone who might be able to help.”

### ***#5 – Let someone break the tie.***

If you can't decide what you should take off your calendar, get someone who isn't emotionally involved to break the tie. If you're choosing between two things that seem equally important, let someone else speak into your life.

### ***#6 – You don't have to always be available.***

This is tough for pastors, but taking care of a congregation means you have to first take care of yourself. And you don't have to be available to everyone all of the time. That job belongs to Jesus. Block time on your calendar so you can work on the things you need to work on. Block nights, days and, weeks on your calendar for time off. And choose to not feel guilty about it at all.

### ***#7 – Plan your week on Sunday night.***

After the dust settles on a Sunday night, spend about 30 minutes planning your week. Think about your desired outcomes, the most important projects, and the people you want to connect with. Here is a [PDF you can use to plan your week with purpose.](#)

### ***#8 – Think outcomes, not tasks.***

Instead of thinking of all the things you need to do, decide what 2-3 outcomes you want to experience. Align your tasks and calendar to those outcomes. It's a subtle, but important difference.

### ***#9 – Make appointments with yourself.***

Most people's calendars are filled with other people's priorities. So make sure you block time to work on the things you need (or want) to work on. Protect time on your calendar for these important meetings.

### ***#10 – Go home.***

At the end of the day, go home. The work will be there tomorrow and nothing bad will happen. Same thing for the end of the week.

### ***#11 – Batch projects.***

Without intentionality, you can spend an entire day responding to emails or messaging people on social media. Schedule some time at the end of the day to handle email. Give yourself 30 minutes to engage on social channels. Keep these tasks together and just don't worry about them at other times of the day.

### ***#12 – Work through the Eisenhower Decision Matrix.***

It's a funny name but it's a powerful exercise. This four-box grid can help you intentionally design your calendar. You'll find more details, as well as a printable template, [here](#). Here's the bottom line:

- Important and Urgent: Do it.
- Important but Not Urgent: Schedule it.
- Unimportant but Urgent: Delegate it.
- Unimportant and Not Urgent: Drop it.

If you're a Church Fuel member, you'll find a worksheet and walk thru video on the member's site.

### ***#13 – Make templates.***

Do you have repeatable tasks? Make a checklist or a project template. Do it the same way and in the same order each time.

### ***#14 – Manage your energy, not just your schedule.***

Make sure you know when you're most productive. As much as you can, align your schedule with when you feel the most productive. If it's in the morning, use that time for real work and push your meetings to the afternoon.

### ***#15 – Activity is not the same as productivity.***

You can check off a lot of tasks and still not accomplish anything of value. Make sure you know the difference.

### ***#16 – Take control of your phone.***

You aren't required to have every social media app on your phone. And all of those notifications can be disabled. A phone is a great tool, but it's a colossal time-waster for most of us.

### ***#17 – Dial back the news.***

While it's good to know what's going on, instant access may not always be a good thing.

Take a break, set boundaries, or lessen the desire to be in the know.

### ***#18 – Skip the meeting.***

It's okay if you skip a standing meeting every now and then. Appoint a delegate and give others the chance to participate. Or better yet, give someone else the chance to lead.

### ***#19 – Book a guest speaker and get ahead.***

Invite a guest speaker to speak on Sunday for no other reason than getting an extra week ahead.

### ***Take a Next Step***

As you read this list, hopefully, you found a few ideas that could work for you. You're doing important work, and we want you to stay in ministry for a long time. That means creating boundaries and working strategically.

For more practical advice on leading a healthy and growing church, download The Senior Pastor's Guide. It's packed with lots of tips on leading yourself, leading people, working with volunteers, and doing ministry.

[Download the guide here.](#)