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# Six Tips For Busy Pastors

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Between writing sermons, attending meetings, and managing ministries, a pastor's schedule can quickly fill up. You've got to...

- Preach the Word. (2 Timothy 1:13-14, 2 Timothy 4:1-2)
- Shepherd the congregation. (Ephesians 6:18, 1 Thes. 5:14).
- Train and equip leaders for ministry (2 Timothy 2:2).

Those are just a few of the tasks the Bible outlines for pastors. It's a high calling that comes with a lot of responsibility.

At times, it can feel like you have too much on your plate.

Here are some leadership and time management tips for pastors who have a lot to do.

## ***1. Decide 1-2 big things you want to accomplish this week.***

Have you ever reached the end of a workday or a workweek, looked back in reflection, and wondered what you truly accomplished?

I've had a lot of days like that. The days where you do stuff all day, but don't really get anything done.

In [Uncommon Service](#), Frances Frei and Anne Morriss remind leaders that their organizations aren't going to be good at everything. To deliver great service in areas that matter most, you have to intentionally decide where you're going to stink. Walmart isn't trying to create warm, comfortable environments...they are trying to deliver on a low price promise. They have decided where to stink based on their priorities as a company.

This is a great principle for organizations, but it's also one of the keys to getting the right stuff done. As a pastor, you can't do everything. You can try, but you'll just run yourself ragged. Go ahead and decide what you're going to accomplish this week. Make a shortlist of a few important priorities and orient your schedule to get those few things done.

A decision to focus on something is the decision not to worry about everything else. And this doesn't mean those other things aren't important. It just means they aren't for now.

One of the best ways to do this is to take a few minutes on Sunday night to look back at the last week and look ahead to the next week. Twenty or thirty minutes of reflection and planning can really keep you focused on what matters most.

## *2. Finish your sermon early in the week.*

The Old Testament describes the principle of "first fruits." God's people were supposed to bring the first part of the harvest to the priests and the temple as a part of their tithes and offerings.

If you're a preacher, you've probably preached this principle. You've challenged your congregation to give God their best, not their leftovers. You've taught the tithe is the first 10%. You've taught percentage giving should come off the top and God somehow blesses.

This is a great principle, but it's not just true of money. It's also true of time.

If you're the primary preacher at your church, writing a sermon that is faithful to the text and inspires people to follow Jesus is one of your primary responsibilities. One might argue it's your most important task of the week.

Yet pastors routinely wait until Friday, Saturday, or even Sunday morning to complete it.

With this one giant task hanging over our heads, pressure builds throughout the week. Meetings, conversations, and other tasks push the ultimate task further down the line. So let's apply the principle of firstfruits to your time, and specifically, to your sermon.

If it's the most important thing you've got to do each week, finish it early. Set a deadline to have it complete by Wednesday or Thursday. Force yourself to email an outline or manuscript to a few people willing to read it and provide feedback. Create a deadline that's earlier in the week and you'll be amazed how much pressure will be removed from the weekly schedule.

When I teach this principle, pastors often tell me it's not possible because of all the other things they have to do, but it's not a matter of time...we're all busy. It's a matter of priority. Don't do some of the other things for one week and get a few days ahead. Then stay there.

### ***3. Just hit delete.***

There are professional organizers you can hire to come to your house and help you organize everything. I met one such lady at a speaking event and we had a great conversation. People hire her to clean out their garage and get rid of toys. Business owners hire her to set up their inboxes and streamline their offices. She stays busy.

If you were to hire a professional organizer, they would make you get rid of stuff because they know clutter is the enemy of productivity. This isn't just a personality thing – there's a lot of science behind it.

One of the keys to personal productivity is to get rid of things you don't really need. Throw it away! Hit delete!

If you have 827 emails in your Inbox, you're not going to do anything with them. They are clutter. Stop holding on to them in hopes you're going to have

a free week to process them all. Declare amnesty and hit delete. Then make sure you stay there on a weekly basis.

If you have a desk full of junk, it's taking up mental space as well as physical space. Throw it in the trash can. Not on a shelf or in a drawer – I'm talking about getting rid of stuff for good.

Editors take paragraphs and make them better. They take sentences and make them stronger. And the #1 way they do this is by deleting unnecessary words. You can edit your life and improve productivity just by taking stuff away.

#### *4. Take someone with you.*

A pastor has to equip people to do the work of the ministry. Not to do all the ministry, but to equip others to do it. That sounds like a great principle, but man, is it tough to implement!

Even though you know it's better to delegate and develop someone, it's usually faster to do it yourself. With a busy schedule already, how in the world are you going to find time to develop people to do ministry?

One of the best ways to do this is to take someone with you.

- If you're visiting someone in the hospital, take someone with you.
- If you're going to a meeting, take someone with you.
- If you're meeting another pastor for lunch, take someone with you.

This is the best kind of leadership development. And it's how you can develop people all of the time.

See, discipleship is much more relationship than it is class. It's creating conversations more than creating a curriculum.

When you take people with you or bring them into what you're already doing, you're not adding a lot to your plate, but you're teaching people and developing them in the process.

## 5. Go home.

This is going to sound counterproductive, but deep down, you know it's true.

One of the keys to being more productive at work is to stop working when it's time to stop working. In other words, when you reach the end of a workday, go home.

Go home. It really can be that simple.

My friend Jeremie runs a growing organization called Giant Worldwide and he taught me a principle a couple of years ago. Since I really enjoy work, it's easy for me to take work home. I get in the zone, get on the phone, and start processing ideas. Without meaning to, I go home but never leave work.

So Jeremie shared [the principle of the 5 gears](#) with me and challenged me to pick a physical marker on my way home to trigger a downshift. When I drove past this particular gas station, it would be a sign to put down the phone and get ready to go into family mode.

You don't have office hours as a Christian. That's a 24/7 thing. Same goes for the fruit of the spirit and having the heart of a pastor.

But the tasks of your job, it's necessary for you to set those down and go home. You don't need to be available to people 24 hours a day. You need to go home at the end of the workday and you need a weekly sabbath in your life. Trust me, the church is going to survive just fine.

## *6. Make appointments with yourself.*

Here's a practical idea for how to schedule time to do the things you need to do.

If you've got a big project or task that needs your time, put it on your calendar and treat it like an appointment.

If you had a lunch meeting with a friend or a coffee meeting scheduled with a mentor, it would be really hard for you to blow it off or work right through it. You'd get off your email, get in the car, and head to your appointment.

So why not treat big projects like that? Schedule some time to work and hold yourself to it like you would any other important appointment.

Those are six productivity tips for busy pastors. Have you tried any of these things? What would you add to this list?

## *Free Help for Church Leaders*

Feel like your church should be growing, but it's not? From someone who used to be a pastor and church planter, I know it can be frustrating.

Ultimately, church growth is up to God. But are we doing everything we can to ensure our church is healthy? How do we overcome the barriers we feel are in front of us?

We know you care deeply about leading a healthy growing church because it means leading more people to Jesus. As a result we created a free guide to breaking barriers that will bring clarity and help begin to alleviate your frustrations.

Get your FREE copy of the Senior Pastor's Guide to Breaking Barriers today.

[Download the guide](#)