

TIME

DOING VS. MANAGING:

The board retreat had been slated for weeks, a twenty-four-hour breakaway at a commodious hotel where pastor and deacons would gather to eat, relax, pray, and plan the coming year together. They would rendezvous on Friday evening as soon as each man's schedule would allow, and when the working sessions were completed, their wives would join them on Saturday evening for a candlelight dinner.

But with one ring of the phone early Thursday morning, all that went out the window.

A long-time member of the church, a dedicated Sunday school teacher, had died in her sleep. Within hours it became clear that the wake would need to be on Friday night, with the funeral scheduled for 1:30 Saturday.

Reluctantly the pastor dialed each deacon to say, "It looks like we'll have to find another weekend. As much as I hate to upset the plans, my place for now

is with the grieving family." The board, while disappointed, could only agree with the postponement.

Calendar upheavals such as this one are native to church ministry; they go with the territory. They also illustrate a peculiar pair of demands upon pastors: the need to minister directly to parishioners but also the need to guide the ministry of others, to be both shepherd and administrator, Indian as well as chief, front-line soldier as well as four-star general, doer as well as manager.

In the saner world of business, of course, corporate designers arrange neatly etched pyramids of responsibility that nurture promising employees through an orderly rise. In the early years of apprenticeship, workers spend almost all their time *doing*: running the machines, or calling on customers, or keeping the records. They are productive; they and others like them are engaged in the core activity of what the firm is all about.

THE ETERNAL

Why pastors run out of hours—and what to do about it.

DEAN MERRILL

If promoted, however, they eventually cease direct doing in order to manage the doing of others. This is not always an easy transition. But it is essential if they ever hope to become president of the company. They must stop focusing upon making the refrigerators and start focusing on planning, directing, and controlling the *people* who make the refrigerators.

In the ministry, you may have noticed that things are not nearly so tidy.

No matter how senior his rank, the white-haired pastor is still a doer come Sunday morning. He steps into the pulpit and opens the Word to a congregation just as he did four decades earlier. He does it now with a great deal more expertise and sensitivity, but he is still involved in feeding the flock of Christ; he is still an undershepherd tending to the needs of those in his care. Pastors, like physicians and cello players, hold within themselves a unique capability to soothe the lacerations of humankind. If they ever allow

themselves to be promoted (?) to bishop, hospital administrator, or orchestra conductor, they quiz themselves long afterward about what was gained and lost in the change.

Yet no pastor goes through a week, or even a day, without managing—guiding, steering, training, equipping, enabling others to do the work of ministry. One of the New Testament terms for this, after all, is *episkopeo*, “to oversee” (I Peter 5:2; cf. Acts 20:28). Senior ministers of big-city churches are not the only ones who oversee; the all-alone pastor of a three-point circuit in North Dakota has, if anything, a trickier management situation, since he guides only laypeople, and often from a distance of twenty miles.

Doing and managing—they both are intrinsic parts of the pastor’s life and work, now and forever. They represent two different kinds of work, requiring different sets of skills. Yet many never stop to

TUG OF WAR

think about the distinction.

Stop for a moment and sort the following list in the two categories.

IS THIS DOING OR MANAGING?

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|---|---|---|
| 1. Preaching | D | M |
| 2. Reading the mail | D | M |
| 3. Counseling with an unwed mother | D | M |
| 4. Showing your new secretary how the payroll is processed | D | M |
| 5. Fixing the church van | D | M |
| 6. Planning a missions conference | D | M |
| 7. Serving on a district/synod committee | D | M |
| 8. Choosing the Sunday hymns | D | M |
| 9. Writing a job description for the Sunday school superintendent | D | M |
| 10. Enlisting a lay coordinator for the nursery workers | D | M |
| 11. Praying | D | M |
| 12. Reading LEADERSHIP | D | M |
| 13. Choosing a new furnace for the church | D | M |
| 14. Thinking through a youth retreat with the group's sponsors | D | M |
| 15. Framing a set of goals for the year | D | M |
| 16. Jotting a thank-you note | D | M |
| 17. Deciding whether to add a staff person | D | M |
| 18. Giving an out-of-town visitor a tour of your building | D | M |
| 19. Brainstorming a new idea with a deacon | D | M |
| 20. Reviewing the monthly balance sheet prepared by the treasurer | D | M |

If you had trouble deciding at some points of the quiz, consider these definitions:

Pastoral *doing* is direct ministry to individuals and groups, along with preparation for that direct ministry. Prayer and meditation, for example, are one kind of preparation, while checking the sanctuary temperature early Sunday morning may be a very different kind—but they both need to happen in order to maximize the preaching, counseling, or

Doing and managing don't always come neatly separated, with breathing space between.

other direct ministry soon to follow. *Doing*, reduced to its core, is pure John 21:15—"Feed my lambs."

Pastoral *managing* is guiding and enabling God's people to become ministers according to the gifts they have received. It is providing the climate and information that set up the lay or staff person to function successfully. Reduced to its core, pastoral *managing* is pure Ephesians 4:12—"the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (NASB).

Both are worthy things to do with one's time. Both are essential. Both are ordained by God. Neither one should be avoided or begrudged.

And therein lie the practical problems.

The Whiplash Syndrome

One difficulty is that the two sets of work don't always come neatly separated, with breathing space between. A parent's question about how to handle a troublesome teen-ager falls hard on the heels of a Sunday school planning conference, while a decision about mimeograph supplies waits impatiently in line. Day after day, and especially Sunday after Sunday, doing and managing go dancing across our lives like two terriers, chasing each other and nipping at each other so quickly they make us dizzy.

"At the end of a service," says a Lutheran pastor whose congregation numbers 450 in two services on an average Sunday, "there are always people I should see about various things in the church. But at the same time, I need to be available to greet people and let them talk about what's on their minds. With some individuals, that can take a full five minutes, and I have to discipline myself not to be looking out the corner of my eye at the others who are waiting to see me, or moving on toward the door. It's a joyful time in one way, but it's also frustrating."

Switching mind-sets several times each day or even each hour is one of the tough challenges for doer/managers.

Both Directions at Once?

Sometimes the two sides of the pastor's calling seize him at the same moment and begin pulling. It is as if Doing and Managing are two opponents in a tug of war match, and the pastor, unfortunately, is



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the rope. They pull and haul with great groaning, insisting that if he is any kind of a man of God, he must come with them *now*. Needless to say, it's no fun being a pastor at such a moment.

Of the two, Doing is usually the noisier, the more demanding. Doing, by the way, is also the crowd favorite. Parishioners like to see their pastor doing. Preaching, counseling, visiting—that's what his life is all about, many assume. So they cheer for the

efforts of Doing and even go give a few jerks on the line themselves from time to time.

Managing, on the other hand, is a more finely dressed contestant with more suavity. He pulls hard, but as he does, he is also quietly talking, plying the pastor with benefits if he will only come his way: efficiency, power, respect among the professional class, advancement.

And even if you convince one side to be patient,

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there are only so many hours in the week to spend with each.

"As your job keeps growing," observes one veteran pastor who has seen steady growth in his church over a fifteen-year period, "a couple of things can happen. Either you tend to specialize in your favorite activities—the things you find easiest, for which you

have the most natural talent—in which case the parish suffers. Or else you keep trying to do it all—and you have a nervous breakdown."

Whichever side we prefer will take over our entire week if we let it. Some pastors are oriented to doing; they derive special satisfaction from the services themselves and their other face-to-face ministry to

pect tremendous amounts of aid from him. For close to thirty years he had given himself to requests large and small.

"A lady in her sixties called me one day," the new pastor tells, "to say, 'It's kind of bad outside today; could you take me shopping?' When I demurred, she informed me that Pastor _____ had always been willing to help her on snowy days."

Polite explanations were not entirely successful in changing her. She began approaching the new pas-

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tor's wife and even their children to get the service she had grown to expect. The corker came the day she asked, "Do you suppose your husband could stop by this week and help me wrap my Christmas presents? Pastor _____ always helped me get them in the mail every year."

The new pastor's wife choked down her laughter as she cheerfully replied, "You know, I can't even get him to wrap Christmas packages at *our* house, so I doubt there's much of a chance for anybody else!"

But other kinds of doing are entirely legitimate. Pastors engage in great quantities of strategic, straight-on ministry each week, and always will. Meanwhile, their elders, deacons, trustees, teachers, ushers, committee chairpersons, secretaries, musicians, and (if they should be so fortunate) staff associates are waiting to be guided, helped, organized, encouraged, steered, and loved in ministries of their own.

The question is obvious: How?

Help for the Stretched

Some solutions that have proved useful in placating the tension between doing and managing are:

1. *Take a hard look at what might be switched from one column to the other.* An Assembly of God pastor whose small-town congregation has grown from zero to 325 in less than four years says, "From the very beginning, God's call to me was to raise up an army of workers to build his church. But in spite of that, I found myself going two and three weeks straight sometimes without a single night at home. I finally had to admit that twelve- and fourteen-hour days don't bring glory to God.

"So I cut myself out of a home Bible study I was leading, and the church's home visitation program as well—I turned both of them over to lay leader-

people, while they dread desk work. Others are organizers and planners and trainers by nature, it seems, and must push themselves to excel at direct doing.

Both have to discern what is valid doing and what is not. A Michigan pastor tells about coming to a church where a predecessor had led the people to ex-

Answers to "Is This Doing or Managing?"

1. **Doing.** This is presenting God's Word directly to an audience.
2. **Doing.** The acquiring of information (and sorting out noninformation) is for personal benefit.
3. **Doing.** This is an individualized version of direct ministry.
4. **Managing.** You're enabling another person to carry on a necessary function independently in the future.
5. **Doing.** In some situations, you may be the only person who knows how, but as you reach for your socket wrenches, be thinking about who else might have this gift.
6. **Managing.** You are organizing the involvement of human resources (missionaries and others) to reach a goal.
7. **Managing.** You, with others, are setting (or at least recommending) policy to govern a wide number of persons.
8. **Doing.** It's part of preparation for ministry and can often be done by someone besides you, if trained.
9. **Managing.** You're defining an area of responsibility that will guide another person in functioning effectively.
10. **Managing.** Again, you are setting up a layperson to minister.
11. **Doing**—and may it never be despised.
12. **Doing.** (Fun, isn't it?)
13. **Doing.** In fact, others may know more about this task than you do.
14. **Managing.** You're guiding the development of an action plan that others will carry out.
15. **Managing.** Because of your position in the church, your goals will affect far more than just yourself.
16. **Managing.** This is motivating.
17. **Managing.** This determines how effective your overall organization will be.
18. **Doing.** This is public relations work.
19. **Managing.** You are drawing another individual into the creative process, thereby stretching his ability.
20. **Managing.** This is overseeing the very important work of the financial officer of the church.

Adapted from a similar quiz in *Manage More by Doing Less* by Raymond C. Loen (McCraw-Hill, 1971)

ship. Several other things were delegated, so that now I'm usually out at night for only the two services (Sunday and Wednesday) and a leadership council meeting every other Monday. The amazing thing is that nothing has suffered, and I feel great.

"Umbilical cords have to be cut. Life demands it. If you don't cut them, death will result.

"Not long ago we had a service to honor those involved in ministry on an every-week basis. We wound up with 65 names—20 percent of the body. That's the only way I can pastor a church of this size with just a part-time secretary and no other paid staff."

Pastors can well afford to take time and make as long a list as possible of their "doings," everything large and small that they personally do throughout a week or month. The next step will be to go back and check the things that could be "managed" through others. Such an exercise will help answer the question "Do I have too much to do? Or do some of these things belong in the other category, if I would make the initial effort to delegate them?"

The point is not to get rid of all doing. To some extent, each person must set his personal style and arrive at a comfortable, efficient ratio between doing

and managing for his situation. A full review of activities can help this process.

Every pastor knows, of course, that delegation will fail unless the lay or staff person is capable of picking up the job. The Lutheran pastor mentioned earlier says, "The key to being able to delegate is to train first. When we first began to involve our elders in active ministry, I was spending up to a third of my time just working with them, coaching them, showing them how, answering their questions, bringing them along. Now the percentage is much lower, as the eldership groups are functioning smoothly.

"I've noticed that people used to be much more demanding of my time than they are now. Why the change over the years? It is because other leaders have been equipped. The pastor is no longer the sole figure on the horizon to help you."

A Presbyterian pastor of a large downtown church says, "I estimate that I save two forty-hour weeks a year simply by not doing wedding rehearsals. I turned that over to a capable lay coordinator, and the effect has been tremendous. She'll even run the rehearsal for my own daughter's wedding next spring; I'll be there too, but only as the father of the bride!"

2. *Block out some hours of the week for each category—*

and be tough about maintaining them. Not every piece of the week can be tightly scheduled, of course; allowance must always be made for surprises and emergencies. But that does not mean that *some* parts of the week cannot be earmarked for doing, and other parts for managing, to the everlasting protection of both.

"You have to prioritize and then not apologize," says one pastor. "For example, I've committed myself to go to a nursing home here in town every Thursday morning at 10:30. I don't preach; I just sit down at the piano and play and sing for half an hour. I love it, and so do they.

"If someone walks into my office at 10:25 and needs counseling, I say, 'Fine—have a seat, and I'll be back at 11:00. I have a commitment to keep, and I'll be glad to spend time with you as soon as I return.'

"I've learned that not every crisis is a crisis."

The apostle Paul once said that the parts of the body of Christ that seem less honorable should be treated with special honor (1 Cor. 12:23). Perhaps a corollary of that teaching is that the parts of a pastor's work that seem most slippery should receive the greatest protection on the calendar. If personal prayer, or reading, or family time tend to get the short end of the week, they need the most ironclad time allotments in order not to vanish altogether.

One of my vivid memories as a boy is of the quiet Sunday afternoons with my mother, while my father waited before the Lord at the church two blocks away. I was only a grade-school kid, but I was deeply impressed by the fact that he would decline all dinner invitations from members and would disappear soon after a light lunch at home, not to be seen again until the evening service. When I asked him why, he would explain, "There'll be up to a hundred people in those pews tonight, expecting to hear God's message. The most important thing I can do this afternoon is make sure I'm ready to speak. You and I can play catch tomorrow after school, okay?"

Certain blocks of time for managing can be guarded just as jealously. The five pastors of one large church meet for prayer every Wednesday at 11:00, then go to lunch together, and begin their staff meeting at 1:00. "Not even funerals interrupt this schedule," says the senior pastor. "We simply work them forward or back an hour or two so we don't upset our rhythm. Yes, it's important that we conduct funerals, but it's also important that we have staff meetings. The one doesn't have to automatically bump the other."

3. *Educate the congregation regarding your game plan.* The ministerial lifestyle is shrouded in too much

The ministerial lifestyle is shrouded in too much myth.

myth. "Some pastors are so concerned about image," says one veteran, "that if the phone rings at 2 A.M., they don't want to sound sleepy!" He advises colleagues to print their schedules occasionally in newsletters or weekly bulletins. "If you tell people your style, they'll honor it. My people know I study early in the morning and go to bed early as well, and so they don't call me late.

"If we think the laity ought to be good organizers of time, then we must model it for them."

More than one church unashamedly prints "Pastor's Day Off" on each week of the monthly calendar, thereby safeguarding privacy and steering inquiries toward the established office hours of the week.

4. *When helter-skelter strikes in spite of all your efforts, relax.* Like the situation described at the beginning of this article, there will be days that simply come unglued, no matter how well planned at the outset. Emergencies will arise, and appointments will have to be rescheduled. The pastorate, after all, is a people business, and people's lives do not always unfold in an orderly fashion.

But even in those chaotic times, an inner sense of what is doing and what is managing can help organize one's thinking. *Does this brushfire call for my direct efforts? Or have I already prepared someone else to deal with this as effectively as I could?* The answer will vary with each situation. Either way, calmness and clarity will be our secret weapons.

The Best of Both Worlds

In the final analysis, we have much to appreciate. Wouldn't it be tedious to spend one's years in a straitjacket of always doing, never having the opportunity to reproduce life and ministry in other people? To come to the end and know that no change had occurred except through our solitary efforts would seem meager indeed.

On the other hand, to be always training others, ushering them toward the limelight, and never feeling the thrill of personal accomplishment, never whispering to oneself, "I really did it, didn't I?"—that too would leave most of us unfulfilled.

Maybe the unique role of doer/manager in God's church is a good place to be after all. ■

To be straightforward with God is neither an easy nor a common grace.

—Frederick William Faber