

Five Primary Sources of Distraction in Ministry

Yesterday's post on "[opportunity creep](#)" introduced a common problem for pastors. It's easy for opportunity after opportunity to press in and vie for the precious little time God has given you.

The first step to dealing with opportunity creep is to **identify the sources of opportunities in way that repositions them as distractions**. If we don't understand that most opportunities are distractions in disguise, it will be hard to say "no" to the next seemingly "good" thing. See if these sources clarify the point:

Opportunity Becomes Distraction #1: **The New is Askew**

Who doesn't love something new? Especially for us creative types its easy to feel the rush of the next. **But the lure of the new can drive us to do too much at the same time, or too much to fast**. The opportunistic personalities among us will look for the next ministry "find" before going deeper with what we already have. This week I was with a church that lamented, "*Our people aren't clear about who we are because we re-package ourselves every six months.*" In short, make sure the next new thing is a deeply "you thing."

Opportunity Becomes Distraction #2 **Off-Mission Permission**

In the desire for more ministry its easy to say "yes" to the ideas of well-meaning members. The problem is that most of their ministry aspirations are misdirected because they want to create more church structure and programming rather than living out their gifts and calling in life. The church very quickly becomes over-programmed and under-disciplined. The "more is more" default mode of program-permission clutters a simple discipleship experience in and through the church. **Helping people dream big for Jesus is beautiful, overcomplicating church is not.**

Opportunity Becomes Distraction #3: **Funny Money**

There is nothing more freeing than an abundance of resources, unless it comes with the proverbial attached string. **Beware of that check-cutting, money-slinging individual—whether its a new member of an influential elder—that's ready to fund the next thing (that they brought to the table.)** If a new idea is connected to designated giving, always ask, "*Would our vision really have taken us in this direction?*" If people are not willing to subordinate their giving to the existing vision of the church, than it's probably as distraction in disguise. (Sorry to break the bad news.)

Opportunity Becomes Distraction #4: **Knowledge Trafficking**

I enjoy learning as do most called into vocational ministry. **But when our pursuit of knowledge outpaces our put-in-use of knowledge we'll get used to living with distraction**. To make matters worse, now you can get a direct feed of whatever-you-want-to-learn, whenever-you-want-to-learn through the fifty devises in your life. **Don't let your smart phone turn you into a not-so-smart leader**. One of the greatest benefits of organizational and personal clarity, by the

way, is the ability to ruthlessly filter out non-relevant new data.

Opportunity Becomes Distraction #5: **Platform Jacking**

The last source of distraction meddles a bit more than the others. **Platform jacking is when we divert too time and energy to gaining influence through opportunities outside of direct day-to-day ministry responsibilities.** There is certainly nothing wrong with wanting to “bless the capital ‘C’ church”— a noble aspiration for sure! Yet I am amazed at how quickly the favor of God on a pastor can back-fire on the mission of the ministry. The success of the local church can become a “success distraction” for the pastor who spends increasing amounts of time growing his or her platform. Most of us have seen this in someone else, so just be discerning for yourself.

Read more from Will [here](#).