

How to Lead by Priorities Not Pressures

Your ministry will be shaped by either your priorities or your pressures.

If you don't decide what's really important in your ministry, you'll have people lining up to do it for you. You know as well as I do that many people in our churches have lots of ideas for our ministries. Without a sense of focus, you'll be pressured to do all kinds of things in your ministry, regardless of whether it's what God wants you to do.

You must line up your priorities by God's standards.

It's like light. When you concentrate light, it has the power to burn. Light defused has no power at all, but if you focus it under a magnifying glass you can burn grass. If you concentrate it even more, it becomes a laser that cuts steel.

When you learn to concentrate your ministry, you'll be more effective.

But you don't just need a to-do list. You also need a *not-to-do list*. Why? Because effective ministry means knowing what you personally are and are not called to do. The more you concentrate your life, the more your life will have impact.

How Jesus stayed focused

Jesus is a great example of this kind of focus in ministry. When he was only 12 years old, Jesus said, *"I must be about My Father's business"* (Luke 2:49 NKJV). Jesus had his purpose clarified early, before he was even a teenager. Then, some of his last words recorded in the Gospels were, *"I have finished the work you gave me to do"* (John 17:4 GNT). Those are bookends on a successful life. At 12, Jesus knew his purpose in life, and near the end of his earthly ministry, he said that purpose had been completed.

When Jesus said he had completed all the work God had given him, had he healed everyone? Of course not. Had everyone become a Christian? No. Had everyone even heard the Good News? Nope.

There are many, many good things you can do. But you can't do everything. Some priorities look good, but they aren't going to be worth it five years from now. What counts is doing and completing the things God tells you to do.

What does that mean? It means that God doesn't expect you to do everything. We have just enough time to do the will of God—24 hours is enough time to do what God has called you to do for that day. He does not have more things for you to do in life than the time he gives you to do it. Learning to minister like Jesus means focusing on what's most important: life change.

The people who make a difference in the world are the people who are the most focused. They focus their lives around a few goals—not 20. If you don't live by priorities, you'll be managed by

your pressures. Either you determine what's important in life or other people will determine it for you.

Learning to delegate

You may read this and wonder, "If I don't do all these ministry activities I've been doing, who will?"

Great question. That's why you need to delegate, empowering others to serve and make Kingdom impact.

God has called you into ministry, but he has not called you to do it alone. In fact, lone ranger ministers burn out and don't last. Mark 3:14 says, "[Jesus] appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach" (NIV).

One of the reasons people burn out in ministry is that they believe everything God is doing depends on them. Jesus himself, who was perfect, enlisted and trained 12 people. That in itself shows the need for partnering together to do ministry. Jesus needed association. He needed community. So do you, or you won't make it in ministry.

Saddleback outgrew me a long time ago. If I tried to control everything, the church would have stopped growing at about 300. Your ministry needs to outgrow you. You must be willing to share and delegate your ministry. D. L. Moody, one of the great pastors and evangelists of the 19th century, said, "I'd rather put 10 people to work than do the work of 10 people." There's wisdom in that.

It may be that the most important work you do this week is determining what God has called you to do—and *what he has called you not to do*. Then find some people to come alongside you to help with the things you're not called to do.

> Read more from Rick.
