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# GROWTH POINTS

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With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

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## Managing Your Time

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One of the most difficult challenges for a pastor is to determine what to do with one's time during the day. No one typically holds a pastor accountable for the use of his time. Thus, it's easy for pastors to wallow along ineffectively day after day, just waiting to react—jump into action—when needs arise. No one sees that they are essentially doing nothing in particular most of the time.

Some pastors are proactive when it comes to sermon preparation. They have a set time to study, lay out a preaching calendar, and select topics well in advance. The notion of taking a proactive stance with caregiving and other daily activities, however, never enters their thinking. They are shepherds waiting for the sheep to call in a time of need. Yet, to minister effectively means pastors must take seriously the most precious of all resources—time. Pastors must say, “Given my limited resources, the most precious of them being my time, with *whom* or on *what* should I be spending it.”

## Types of People

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A helpful way of analyzing with whom you should spend time starts with

acknowledging that people in your church are either VIPs, VTPs, VNPs, or VDPs.

Everyone knows that VIPs are *very important people*. They are the ones in your church who lead others to accomplish the vision and goals of ministry. VIPs embody your church's core values and model the way for others to follow.

VTPs in your church are *very trainable people*. Many are engaged in some sort of service, with some in leadership positions. They are those who are F.A.T.—faithful, available, and teachable.

VNPs are *very nice people*. Your church would be a poor place without them. They attend worship services on a regular schedule, give money to the offerings, and support the church's ministry programs. They speak about Christ to their family and friends and invite them to church when the opportunity is open.

**Dr. Gary L. McIntosh is available for personal life and ministry coaching. Email [cgnet@earthlink.net](mailto:cgnet@earthlink.net) for full details.**

VDPs are *very draining people*. Some are critics of your ministry, while others are highly needful folks who require extra care and grace. Many are those who need special care for a limited time, for example, those seeking pre-marital counseling or ones who just need a short conversation over coffee. What they all have in common is the way they drain energy from most pastors.

Looking at the life of Christ through the lens of this description reveals a fascinating picture of where he spent his time. Admittedly, the Bible only gives a selected perspective on the life of Jesus, but using what we know, Jesus divided his time as follows:

- VIPs: The Twelve Disciples
  - VTPs: The Seventy
  - VNPs: The Crowd
- VDPs: The Saducees and Pharisees

## Following Jesus

Jesus spent little time with the very draining people (VDPs). He listened to the critics and responded to the needy but never let either of them control or divert his time away from larger goals.

Plus, Jesus expended just a little more time with crowds of people

(VNPs). His feeding of the 5,000 is one example. Giving time to larger crowds of people was necessary, as many of them were good people moving toward greater commitment to him and his message. It was the pool out of which trainable people were discovered and recruited.

By far, Jesus dedicated most of his time to those who were open to his message and trainable for future leadership: the seventy and the twelve (VTPs & VIPs). He sent the seventy out on mission, and he lived his life with the twelve.

Fundamentally, Jesus gave most of his time to those who ministered to others (VIPs and VTPs) and less to those who needed ministry (VNPs and VDPs).

Applying this perspective to your own ministry, where are you investing your time? To whom should you be giving your time? For most pastors, the best division of time might look (should look?) something like the following:

- VIPs: Elders, Deacons, etc.
- VTPs: Ministry Leaders and Volunteers
  - VNPs: Sunday Congregation
  - VDPs: Critics and Needy People

So . . . where do you invest your time? Look back over the last month or year and calculate your investment of time with each of these four types of people. What needs to change? How could you invest your time more effectively?

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