

Coach's Corner

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“Church Economics”

Anyone who farms, owns their own business, or simply seeks to manage their own family budget knows how important it is to be economical. The farmer wants to make as few a rounds in each field with the pivot and tractor as possible while realizing a good yield. The business owner desires to make the most money possible while keeping his costs down. And the family, of course, wants their dollar to go as far as it can.

We should have this same approach when it comes to leading in the Church. Of course this applies to the use of finances. Yet, beyond this I am thinking of managing another resource: people. In the same way that a family or business can get into trouble when it is not thoughtful and intentional, so also a church can run into problems if it does not budget people resources. Let me explain.

Every family in our church must somehow budget its time use between family, work, church and ministry, activities (such as school functions and sports), rest, and recreation, chores around the home, and much more. The amount of time given to the church and ministry will not only be determined by this interplay of life areas, it will also most likely be impacted by spiritual maturity and/or desire one has to serve—not to mention age and physical state. When we take all these into consideration we are reminded everyone is limited in the time which can be invested into ministry. Additionally, there will always be a significant number of people who will invest very little into ministry opportunities and responsibilities within the congregation. What this means is that we must “get the biggest bang for the [time] buck,” “kill the most birds with the fewest stones” as possible, or--you pick your own adage—I think you get the picture.

I believe one of the responsibilities of an elder board in a church is to keep in mind the above realities. Let's take the situation of our own church as an example. Did you know that after taking into consideration elected positions, appointments, and all the ministry slots to be filled in this congregation (such as AWANA, Sunday School, MOPS, worship, etc.), we have about 127 different ministry slots to fill (this doesn't count circles, Vacation Bible School, or the Christmas program)? We look at that and rejoice that so much is happening—and we should! Yet, we must also remember that we have only about 120 adults in the church. This latter number does not count those whom we know are unable to come to church, but only those who regularly or occasionally come. What this means is that we have more ministry slots to fill than adults in the church. Now, some of the slots (e.g. helpers in classrooms) might be filled by youth. That's true. However we might adjust the numbers, the outcome won't be that different and the conclusion is the same. We must keep in mind church economics, the budgeting of people resources.

When we do not keep this in mind, one or more of several outcomes will be experienced. First, we will be unable to fill ministry positions. Currently, we are struggling to find Sunday School substitute teachers and also a Sunday School superintendent. Does this mean that people in the congregation are not committed? Not necessarily. It does mean that people are busy and a significant number of people are wearing multiple hats.

Second, some people will fill slots, but then not carry out the responsibilities because they felt obligated to say, “yes” so a body could be in the slot, but they really do not want to carry out the ministry. They are simply feeling overcommitted.

Third, some people will fill multiple slots, work and work and work and eventually burn out since they are always going at high gear with the very maximum amount of responsibilities they can carry. They will get to the point that they will no longer want to do anything.

Finally, time will be taken away from other very important aspects of a person’s life since they are overcommitted. Perhaps there will be no time for: personal Bible study and prayer, family, rest, and/or building meaningful relationships with those who aren’t Christians with the prayer that they might be won to Christ.

All-in-all, men, if we do not approach church economics (aka people and ministry resources) with the same kind of intentionality, tenacity, and frugality we do our own family and business finances, then most likely our congregation will not be as healthy and fruitful as it could be.

That is why in our upcoming elder meeting we will begin some related discussions—focusing on things such as committee sizes, the future of children’s ministry, and Sunday School. Please begin praying about these discussions. The exciting part of them is that they are indicative of our church entering into a new developmental stage which can bring wonderful blessings. Yet, to go forward unified and effectively will take a great deal of wisdom from our Lord.

Joyfully pastoring the flock with you toward fruitful economy,

Tom