



PRAY
FREELY



RAISE
PASTORS



GO
OUT



LEARN
ALWAYS



CHURCH
AS FAMILY

Effective in Ministry?

This paper seeks to help Christians handle the huge investment and passion we have for serving Jesus in the light of what can be very turbulent ministry experiences. When we are so committed and passionate - we are also very vulnerable to discouragement. This paper will help you self-manage your emotional expectations of ministry, and manage for yourself (or in groups) effective ministry planning.

THE TWO E'S: EFFECTIVENESS & EMOTIONS

Often we are worried about whether we have been effective in ministry - but really we are doing something else - we are trying to manage the emotions of doing ministry. They are obviously linked - but the remedy for each can be quite different. You already have default patterns to cope with this strain on your sense of effectiveness, or on your wider emotional reactions.

OUR DEFAULT COPING PATTERNS

Before we do anything, we should recognize that we are already coping in some way. But our patterns will be 'default' coping mechanisms, and are probably a mix of healthy and unhealthy patterns.

| | Healthy Patterns | Unhealthy Patterns |
|---------------|---|---|
| Effectiveness | Prayer Strong Theology Role Descriptions Ministry Vision Specific Aims Review | Self-Dependence Shallow Theology Reactive action Reactive change Goalless Anecdote-driven Responses |
| Emotions | Realistic emotional expectations Identity in Christ Perspective & Boundaries Reflection Physical Exercise, Diet & Sleep | Immature expectations Identity in Ministry Catastrophising Self-defense or other-attack Compensatory behaviors (eg. over-exercise, alcohol, pornography, binge behavior, over-shopping) |

Q: Can you name one healthy self-management pattern you possess?

Q: And one unhealthy?

The rest of this paper will focus on

1. setting up effective patterns of vision, goals and review
2. developing realistic emotional expectations of ministry

MINISTRY EFFECTIVENESS & EMOTIONALITY: A SNAPSHOT OF PAUL

Read this snapshot of Paul's ministry from Colossians 1:24-2:5. We will return to it in the material that follows. Though it is *Paul's* ministry - much of it is translatable to any ministry.

²⁴ Now I rejoice in what I am suffering for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ's afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church.¹ ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the Lord's people. ²⁷ To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery², which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

²⁸ He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I strenuously contend with all the energy Christ so powerfully works in me.

^{2:1} I want you to know how hard I am contending for you and for those at Laodicea, and for all who have not met me personally. ² My goal is that they may be encouraged in heart and united in love, so that they may have the full riches of complete understanding, in order that they may know the mystery of God, namely, Christ, ³ in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. ⁴ I tell you this so that no one may deceive you by fine-sounding arguments. ⁵ For though I am absent from you in body, I am present with you in spirit and delight to see how disciplined you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

EMOTIONS & MINISTRY

Pain 1:24

It is hard to know whether pain is an emotion, but feeling hurt, anger, abandonment, despondency and frustration are all a consequence of suffering in ministry because of various afflicting forces - whether it is the world, the flesh, the devil. Or all three.

Strain 1:29

Strain is not pain, but it sometimes feels like it. It is just sheer hard work. It is 'strenuous'. It feels like tiredness, overwhelmed-ness, perseverance, grit.

Joy and Delight 1:24, 2:5

Note that alongside this pain and strain, *and even within them*, Paul possesses both 'joy' (1:24) and 'delight' (2:5). He possesses joy in himself (which may feel like many kinds of emotions!) and delight in them (because of their disciplined and firm maturity).

Q: What has been your emotional experience of ministry so far?

Q: Does this snapshot of Paul adjust your expectations, and how?

¹ 'fill up in my flesh what is lacking in Christ's afflictions': Jesus' afflictions on the cross were complete to achieve our salvation. But Jesus is still afflicted whenever his people suffer for Him, because we are united with Him - we are his 'body'. Paul's afflictions, therefore, are Jesus' afflictions too. So Jesus afflictions were complete for salvation, but our affliction in ministry is a part of ministry in a Christ-opposed world.

² 'the mystery': Paul describes *the gospel* as a mystery in this passage - a secret revealed first to the Jews (that's the 'Lord's people') and now through Paul to the Gentiles (ie. non-Jews).

EFFECTIVENESS IN MINISTRY

Effectiveness is ultimately not our doing – it is God ‘who makes things grow’ (1 Cor 3:7). But how might we be effective in our small part?

What is God’s vision for your ministry?

It is worth stopping and asking where what you propose to do fits in God’s plans? Do you think you know?

Have you have looked at our paper ‘*Direction of Discipleship*’, which we believe is the simplest summary statement of ministry according to God’s vision?

What are my aims? (number & character)

You are running an event, or beginning a discipling relationship? What are your aims? It is worth spelling them out to shape your prayers, your work, and your later reflection. This way you might escape the trap of condemnation or approval by anecdote.

Let them be in **number** if that is helpful (eg. I hope for at least 15 youth at Summerhouse), but consider **character** aims (eg. I want to see some adults in sport with teenage boys and then encouraging/ribbing each other over it).

Aim 1:

Aim 2:

Aim 3:

What is my role?

How can you know if you have done OK, if you aren’t clear from the outset about who Jesus’ people need you to be there? Be specific.

Role 1:

Role 2:

Role 3:

How do I review?

Reviewing what happened can be great. Remember WTD! Come back to this document and consider....

Wisdom: All our work will be hard, frustrating and involve toil. Be realistic. (Ecclesiastes 2:22-24)

Thanksgiving: No labour in the Lord is in vain (1 Cor 15:58). God has been at work. Discern it and thank him!

Discipline: So not everything went well? That’s OK! Where is God’s discipline in it? (Heb 12:11)

Pray!

There is no guarantee you will pray later. Though I hope you do, and if possible, with others. But you can guarantee now. Pray now.