The Church Doctor® Report

CHURCH DOCTOR MINISTRIES

Multiplying Hope Through Healthy Churches

VOLUME 20 NO. 6

Purpose: To connect with those who have an active relationship with Church Doctor Ministries as peers in ministry, clients, and partners in prayer and support.

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Leading With Gospel Values: Practical Steps Aligning Actions With Values

There is a mismatch between what we say is important and how we spend our time. Most pastors and church leaders know this. Putting out organizational fires, crisis meetings, last-minute deadlines, unforeseen events—all these seem to converge throughout the day, and although they need to be taken care of, they often result in frustration and a feeling of being ineffective for the Kingdom. We are supposed to be working for Jesus. Instead, it feels like we are working for everyone in the church except for Jesus.

This discord between what we profess to hold dear and how we actually behave leads to a state of inner conflict known in psychology circles as cognitive dissonance. And the long-term results of cognitive dissonance can be devastating.

On an individual level, unresolved dissonance can lead to stress, anxiety, and a diminished sense of self-integrity. You begin to think of yourself as a hypocrite because the gap between values and action keeps creeping up on you.

The core Gospel values of prayer, our calling, meditation, personal worship, the study of God's Word, and developing relationships with the unchurched seem to get squeezed out by the daily demands of "work."

Traditional management literature has not

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helped the matter. Over the years we have been taught about “time management.” It starts with notes and checklists designed to get us to pay attention to the demands on our time. Then it moves to calendars and appointment books that help us look ahead. Once we have mastered these, so the teaching goes, we can begin to prioritize these demands.

But that only works for a short while. In two to three weeks’ time, we’re back to where we started. The hits keep coming. Perhaps we are a little more efficient with our time, but we still feel the creep of that gap between what we truly believe and how we spend the day.

The difficulty is that time management is reactive. In other words, we are reacting to outside demands and expectations. All kinds of things can come at us from different directions over a period of time, and no matter how well we react, we always seem to be at the mercy of outside circumstances and demands. Time management can only be a short-term fix at best.

What is needed is to be proactive, to realize that we don’t need to manage time. We need to manage ourselves. Relief from dissonance comes when we organize our behaviors in accordance with what we know to be most important: God’s Word, His presence, His mission for the church, and his calling on our life. In other words, Gospel values.

So, how do we do that?

Building on the insight of Steven Covey in his classic book *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, we begin with a grid of four quadrants (Covey, 2020, p. 239).

Work Matrix
(Covey, 2020, p. 239)

	URGENT	NOT URGENT
IMPORTANT	**Q1 Necessity** Crises Emergency meetings Last-minute deadlines Pressing problems Unforeseen events	**Q2 Effectiveness** Core values Planning and prevention Relationship building Learning and renewal Physical health
NOT IMPORTANT	**Q3 Distraction** Needless interruption Unnecessary reports Irrelevant meetings Other people’s minor issues Unimportant emails, tasks, phone calls, status updates, etc.	**Q4 Waste** Trivial work Avoidance activities Excessive relaxation Television, gaming, Internet browsing, time wasters, gossip

Urgent matters are usually visible. They press on us; they insist on action. They’re often popular with others. They’re usually right in front of us.

Important matters, on the other hand, have to do with significance, with results. If something is important, it contributes to your mission, your values, your calling, your high-priority goals. Frequently, important matters are not visible to others.

Quadrant I consumes many people. They are crisis managers, problem-minded people, deadline-driven producers. God bless them. They are needed. However, the longer you spend in Quadrant I, the larger it will become. As a Navy man myself, I appreciate Covey’s description: “It’s like the pounding surf. A huge problem comes and knocks you down and you’re wiped out. You struggle back up only to face another one that knocks you down and slams you to the ground” (Covey, 2020, p. 241).

Some people are beaten up by problems all day, every day. The only relief they have is in escaping to the “not important, not urgent” activities of Quadrant IV. And so, the gap between values and action grows larger. So, too, does the guilt, frustration, and shame. Make no mistake, there is a time for relaxation. However, too often it becomes escape and avoidance from Quadrant I and can spiral out of control.

And then, of course, there are the many people thinking they are in Quadrant I when they are actually in Quadrant III.

They spend most of their time reacting to things that are urgent, assuming those things are also important. But the reality is that the urgency of these matters is often based on the priorities and expectations of others. And many times, those expectations do not align with our own mission and calling. Once again, we face the growing gap between values and action.

Clearly, we want to spend as much time as possible in Quadrant II. Quadrant II is the heart of effective personal management. It deals with things that are not urgent but are important: building relationships, writing a personal mission statement, long-range planning, exercising, preventive maintenance, preparation—all those things we know we need to do, but somehow seldom get around to doing because they aren’t urgent.

As we spend more time in Quadrant II, we will notice that the Quadrant I activities on our plate are shrinking. That’s because our proactive way of living will prevent a number of crises and unforeseen events. And as the gap of cognitive dissonance is narrowed, we will attain clearer sight of the playing field and will be able to look down the road a little further to find more inner resources than we had at the beginning.

So, how can we bridge the gap between what we know is important and how we actually spend our day?

- **Step 1:** Spend time with the Lord. List out those Gospel values and goals that mean so much to you.
- **Step 2:** Using the matrix above, take a snapshot of your life. Fill in the matrix with your present activities. Be as honest as you can. No one but you and the Lord needs to see this.
- **Step 3:** Prayerfully reflect on how these activities align with your values and goals. Some activities may align, and some may not.
- **Step 4:** Now create another matrix that rearranges your activities in a way that is more consistent with your values and goals. What do you keep? What do you delete? What do you move? What do you add? Keep a written record of why you rearranged the things you did. That will help you fine-tune your matrix in the days and weeks ahead.

So, be proactive and not reactive. Lead with Gospel values, and ensure your day is aligned with the priorities and calling of the One Who loves you most.