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Priorities in Ministry

Rev. Johnny Wang

All ministers do good things. But a successful minister in God's eyes, must do better things. It is rather difficult to determine what better things are unless you know where you are heading. When your goal is set, you are then able to reset your priorities. Here is my simple list of priorities for mutual edification.

Praying is More Important than Preaching

This is not to say that a minister should only pray and not spend time in sermon preparation. We should spend more time in prayer. Jesus is our role model in the matter of praying. Mark 1:21-39 recorded that Jesus was in Capernaum and it was there that he had popularity and a great following. Some ministers would be tempted to be in such a place and remained there. But the Lord decided to leave the place after prayer. (Mark 1:35-39) The Lord refused to let the crowd dictate his itinerary. Through prayer, he allowed God to lead him, mindful that he came to preach the Gospel. Studying the Bible is to prepare us intellectually to preach. Praying is to prepare us spiritually to preach. Which would you think is more important?

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The Pulpit is More Important than Administration

Ministers often make the mistake when making a balanced decision between the two – spending an inordinate amount of time to administration to the neglect of making preparation for preaching. From the perspective of the church, they would rather put up with a minister who is weak in administration than one who is an incompetent preacher. Administration and preaching are both important aspects of church ministry. How then could a minister manage both well? The business of a church could be administered by and assigned to members with different gifts. As the preacher shares his vision by the Word of God, members thereby are motivated to action. It is never God's intention nor the teaching from His Word for the minister to do it all. God's people working together to do the works of ministry is! Ministers should focus on preaching and praying. (Acts 6:4)

Administration and preaching are both important aspects of church ministry. How then could a minister manage both well?

The Family is More Important than the Congregation

Ministers usually live for the opinions of his congregation and therefore relegate the needs of his family as secondary. But we need to ask ourselves: If a minister does not take good care of his family, how could he take good care of his church? (1 Timothy 3:5) If a minister

spends time to pray and prepares well for his preaching, the church would not care about him spending time taking care of the needs of his family. The church should be pleased that they have a good role model and a good witness to their families. This would encourage them to pray for you and to support your ministry. Remember, your church is never yours forever. But your family is!

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Being Faithful is More Important Than Being Competitive

Many ministers are successful in their pastoral ministries but not a few experience failures as well. We should not compare with others lest it adds to our sense of failure and hopelessness. Rather, we should thank God for those who are successful. Thank God for the opportunity to be a servant in God's vineyard; Do not care about when others started serving, or complain about their salary being higher than yours (Matthew 20:1-6); Do not be envious of the work of God in the lives of your coworkers. Know that God only requires us to be faithful (I Corinthians 4:1). When ministers stand before God for their ministry evaluation, it is their faithfulness in service and goodness in life that are weighted and counted.

Being Loving is More Important than Our Abilities

Very few ministers have the abilities listed in I Corinthians 13:1-3; the ability to speak in many languages; the ability of Elijah to bring down fire from heaven by prayer; or the faith of the Apostle Paul to move mountains, and so on. In church ministry, it is fool hardy being self-promoting instead of exhibiting the true sense of the selfless love of God! The truth is, the best theological training, the most touching sermon may not be able to change lives; words

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without loving actions are not enough; love in action will demonstrate to ourselves that we are on the side of truth and we could stand firm in the sight of God. (I John 3:18-19) Using the best theological truth to rebuke sinners will never convince them to change. It is only when they experience love, while yet sinners that they will turn to Christ and accept the Gospel. Without love, we can do nothing!

Someone once asked a famous sculptor how he could carve and produce a rock statue, the likeness of an elephant. He replied: "I will chip away every part of the stone that does not look like an elephant, then my work is done!" How does one become a minister used of God? It is simply this: Reject what is not the best and the most excellent and faithfully work on the best and the most excellent!



Rev. Johnny Wang was a former President of and currently serves as an Advisor of the Chinese Baptist Fellowship. He grew up in Shanghai and Hong Kong and responded to the call of God to the Gospel ministry in 1953. He received his tertiary education in China and the US and his theological education in Hong Kong. He and his wife were appointed missionaries by the SBC in 1960 to serve among the Chinese in the States. He had served as the Senior Pastor of the Chinese Independent Baptist Church San Francisco and the Sunset Chinese Baptist Church consecutively for a total of 30 years. He had also served as the Executive Director of the Chinese Christian Mission 1997-2004. After he finally retired, he is active in church ministry through short term missions in Asia, South and Central America and the US. He also supply preaches in the San Francisco Bay Area. He and his wife are married for 59 years and they live in San Francisco, CA.



傳道人事務優先選擇之考慮

王其昌牧師

傳道人都在作一些好事。成功的傳道人，在神的眼中，應當在作那更美好的事。去選擇那更美好的事很難定規，但是有些定向可以考慮。當有了定向後，傳道人就可以決定事務優先的次序，也願意放棄一些初定的目標。今將本人所體會到的事務優先選擇簡列於下共勉。

祈禱比講道更重要

這不是傳道人只祈禱而不預備講章。我們應當更留意我們用時間去禱告。主耶穌是我們當上好的榜樣。馬可福音 1:8-32 記載主耶穌在迦百農已有聲望及群眾。這是傳道人很大的試探要繼續留在那裡的原恩。但是主經過禱告就決定離開該處（1:35-38）。主拒絕讓群眾來決定他的選擇；他經過禱告讓神引導，知道他為什麼而來，是為傳道而來的。研讀聖經是預備頭腦去講道；禱告是預備心靈去講道！那一個較為重要？

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講壇比行政更重要

傳道人往往在這二件事上作了不平衡的選擇；若用太多時間在行政上而致不足時間去準備講道。若讓教會會眾來作選擇，他們能容忍在行政上較軟弱的傳道人，而不是講壇上無能的傳道人。行政及講道都是教會中重要的事情，傳道人怎能兼顧無失呢？教會的事務可以按照教友的不同恩賜去配搭和分擔。傳道人可以多些在講壇上將事工異象分享出來，用神的話去激發及引導他們去行動。傳道人一身包辦並不是聖經給我們看見的事奉模式，彼此配搭才是！傳道人應當專心在傳道及祈禱上（徒 6:4）。

行政及講道都是教會中重要的事情，傳道人怎能兼顧無失呢？

家庭比會眾更重要

傳道人常常為會眾們的意見而活，因此將家庭的需要放在次要。我們要問自己：「若傳道人不好好牧養自己的家，怎會好好牧養教會？」（提前 3:5）。當傳道人好好禱告及講道，教會不會因為他同時能好好的管理他自己的家而向他作批評和埋怨。相反地，傳道人能做到這樣的地步，給教會有了好榜樣，給家人也有好見証，令他們在背後禱告去支持你的事奉。記得，教會不是永遠是你的，家庭及家人才是！

「若傳道人不好好牧養自己的家，怎會好好牧養教會？」

忠心比競爭心更重要

傳道人牧會成功的故事極多；失敗和失望的經歷也不少。我們不要去與人比較而增加了自己失敗和失望感。我們要為他人的成功向神感謝，為自己能在神的葡萄園中有份作工而獻上感恩！不要去理會他人何時進來工作，為他所得的工資較高而抱不平（太 20:1-16）；不要因為主在他人身上所作的事而眼紅！神向我們要求的是忠心（林前 4:1）。當傳道人在神面前接受事奉的評價時，神看我們事奉上有忠心和生命上有良善的質素而定！

愛心比才幹更重要

很少傳道人俱有哥林多前書 13:1-3 所列的才能：能說萬人的方言，像以利亞般的禱告使天降火，又如保羅所言有移山的信心等等。自我表榜的才能而沒有神那種無私的愛，在牧會事奉上是沒有用的！保羅要我們選擇去愛勝過出於才幹而來的事奉。最好的神學訓練及造詣，動聽的講道也未必能改變人的生命；單單言語而沒有愛心的行為是不足夠的；有了帶有愛心的行動才使我們知道我們是屬真理的，並且我們的心在神面前可以安穩（約壹 3:18-19）。用最好的神學道理去責罵罪人是很少能夠感動他們去改變的；唯有人還在作罪人的時候用愛去向他們說明，他們就會相信和接納福音。沒有神的愛，我們不能作甚麼！

自我表榜的才能而沒有神那種無私的愛，在牧會事奉上是沒有用的！

有人問一位著名的雕塑家如何雕一隻大象。他回答說：將凡是不像大象部分的石 除去就成了！如何成為一個被神使用的傳道人？**將不是最美好最上好的放下，揀選那上好更美好的忠心地去做就可以了。**



王其昌牧師曾擔任美加華人浸信會聯會會長，現為該會顧問。他在上海和香港成長，於 1953 年回應上帝傳道事工的呼召。他在中國和美國接受高等教育，在香港接受神學訓練。他與妻子於 1960 年被美南浸信會聯會指派在華人間事奉之國內宣教士。他連續三十年擔任三藩市華人自立浸信會及溢樂華人浸信會的主任牧師。在 1997-2004 他擔任中國信徒佈道會總幹事。退休後，他積極地在亞洲，中南美洲，以及美國的短宣中服侍教會。他經常在舊金山灣區不同的教會中擔任講員。他和師母結婚已有 59 年，目前居住在加州三藩市。