



NEWCHURCHES

MULTIPLY THE MISSION.

3 SERMON PREP TIPS FOR BI-VOCATIONAL PASTORS

By: Marty Duren

There may be no more under appreciated person in the Kingdom that the bi-vocational pastor. Many of them are the only staff member of a small church. They work a job during the week and are still expected to perform most, if not all, of the ministry functions of a full-time pastor. Through the years I have known bi-vocational pastors who had to take time off work to do funerals, did periodic weddings, and still had to preach two or three sermons a week. They did counseling, attended deacons meetings, met with the personnel committee, finance committee, or any number of other groups.

The week of a church planter was recently summarized like this:

Long days have become the standard for Nathan Vedoya. As a bi-vocational church planter, there's no such thing as typical, but this may be as close as it gets. He wakes up early, shares the breakfast-making responsibilities with his wife, and drops the kids off at school before heading to his full-time job as the shelter manager for Hope Mission in Edmonton, Alberta. His wife, Deen-Deen, also heads out to a full day of work at around the same time.

Vedoya spends every weekday—between 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.—working at Hope Mission. Then, as the family reconvenes at 5 p.m. for dinner, he spends much-needed time discipling and enjoying his family.

But on nights and weekends Vedoya's focus shifts to planting a church in one of the toughest-to-reach cities in North America. Despite the busyness, this often-hectic lifestyle is not something the father of three regrets.

"I'm working 50 hours a week and planting a church. My wife is working, too," said Vedoya

It may not be possible to save time at every point of the week, but here are a few time savers that might help with preparing sermons while also holding down a full-time job. I am currently a bi-vocational, part-time teaching pastor. As such I rarely feel the strain of a pastor who is shouldering the entire load. Obviously these suggestions are not intended to supplant spiritual preparation like prayer, but as these ideas help me on a practical level, I hope they will help others.

1. Construct each series framework in advance.

Try not to fall into the trap of creating new sermons from scratch every single week. If you can put together your series in advance it frees up that part of ongoing creativity. Each week you can look at the next passage or sermon on the framework and know exactly where you are and where you need to be.

This will require a bit of advance planning so grab the calendar. Just pick a month two or three months ahead of "right now." List the times you will preach or teach and assign each sermon a date (and time if necessary). Write the name of the message, text you plan to use, and main point or theme. Stay at least two or three months ahead. You can do this in a 1-2 hour sitting. It will save you much time when those dates roll around.

2. Preach through books of the Bible often.

Most pastors preach stand-alone series at least some of the time. Focuses on giving, missions, or family life take three or four Sundays worth of material. Preaching stand-alone series all the time, however, takes an enormous amount of creative energy (not to mention the temptation of always returning to what we know).

Preaching through books of the Bible gives pastors a head start on the framework. It's already there!

As I write this, our church is going through the book of Galatians on Sunday mornings. Breaking down the book by section was done months ago, with individual files created for text, theme, and potential title. Each week I move to the next section of scripture and continue prepping for that week.

3. Use Evernote and Evernote web clipper to save content.

People use different tools for delivering their sermon. Some use a manuscript, some use notes, others preach from an iPad while still

others memorize the entire message. But, what about gathering illustrations, stories, and the rest of the content outside printed materials? I recommend Evernote and Evernote web clipper.

A notebook for every sermon can be created in Evernote. Online content can be procured and saved directly into that same notebook using Evernote web clipper. (Evernote web clipper is a browser extension available for Chrome, Firefox, IE, and Safari.) It is simple to use, and saves an incredible amount of time in sermon preparation. Rather than trying to remember on which website you saw that perfect illustration, or over-filling up your bookmark bar, put the entire story in your folder as you read it. Then, it is in the same digital notebook as you craft the message.

If you are a bi-vocational pastor, you are a gift to the Kingdom. That is unquestioned. Among your number are church planters, those who serve existing churches unable to afford full-time staff, and those who serve as interim and transitional pastors. Rescue a few sermon prep hours using these tips and enjoy family time, alone time, or ministry time instead.