

Greater Sydney Conference



Regional Group Discussion Guide

The Pastor's Family

This month in our regional groups we will be exploring aspects of how the pastoral role impacts our immediate family. The pace and shape of life in Sydney can often squeeze out time for what really matters. Most parents are working just to make ends meet. For the pastor, especially with a young family, this can be made even more complicated by a role that often requires evenings and swallows up weekends.

This guide presents some perspectives on stewarding the pastoral family – you will not agree with all the perspectives however they are worth thinking through. Each of us has different pressures depending on our season of life. However all of us have people we are close to who can be neglected in the run of ministry.

If your children have grown up then this month's group may be a time to share lessons learnt with some younger guys. If you are at a season where family is not the pressure for you then still take the opportunity to think through how you might need to make margins in your life in other ways. If you have a spouse and children right now then this month might be a good time to recalibrate how you are leading them.

While all of us have busy seasons on occasion what is the price when this becomes the norm and the people supposedly closest to you are left to get by on crumbs of your emotional energy?

Enjoy your discussion.

- Why do you think the divorce rate for pastors is amongst the highest of any profession?
- Do you think your children think having a parent for a pastor is a positive or negative?
- What do you think Wayne Cordiero means when he states: "True leadership is having those closest to you respect you the most"
- If you've been a pastor for over 10 years what tips would you give a younger pastor who asked you what you had learnt about leading a healthy family while still being an effective pastor?

The Ministerial Family: Balancing church and family life

Written by Pamela Consuegra

(Ministry Magazine 2011)

Let us begin by taking a quiz.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

1. Pastoral families usually protect their personal and family lives.
2. The expectations of church members often impinge upon a pastor's family and home life.
3. A significant dimension to pastoral ministry is the modelling of healthy family relations.
4. A pastor and/or the pastor's spouse should be available whenever he or she is called upon by a church member.
5. Pastors who turn off their cell phones or home phones in order to spend time with their families deny their church members access, which they have a right to expect.
6. Pastors and their spouses often get so involved with helping others that there is no time left for their own families.

The pastor's family

What do Scripture and the writings of Ellen G. White have to say about our responsibilities to our families?

"If anyone does not take care of his own relatives, especially his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8, ISV).

"Exploit or abuse your family, and end up with a fistful of air" (Proverbs 11:29, *The Message*).

"There is no more important missionary field than our own home"*

As a pastor, do you make a distinction between God and work? This becomes a difficult question when your work includes service to God. Too often we lump service to the church together with service to God when they need to be kept distinct, even separate. They are not the same. Our responsibilities to God should always take top priority over our obligations to the church.

But where do our obligations to our families come in? Do we meet the needs of our church members at the expense of our own families? If so, we are making a big mistake. In order to avoid this, the minister and his or her family must find the right balance between church and home life. What follows are eight principles to help you best prioritize your family in your life.

1. Balance the urgent with the important

Consider the following depiction of things that demand your attention and decide under which heading you operate most of the time.

a: Nonurgent and Unimportant: Here we find the pastoral demands of the trivial, unimportant, inconsequential, irrelevant—or what we might call the junk mail—which some have difficulty escaping from.

b: Urgent but Unimportant: This is the area that demands most of our time. These things seem urgent but are often unimportant in the overall scheme of things.

c: Urgent and Important: This may seem like the best place in which to operate; however, in this setting, you are in crisis mode. Who wants to be putting out fires every day? There must be a better way.

d: Nonurgent but Important: This is actually the best quadrant in which to minister. Deal with the important before the important becomes urgent. The best way to get into this quadrant is to plan, organize, and prioritize. Learning to operate here saves time that you can then give to your family.

2. Let others hold you accountable and help you

You may need some outside help to review how you are using your time. Talk to your local conference ministerial secretary and seek guidance and counsel.

Keep a journal for a 30-day period and review it. How do you spend most of your time? Have a mentor review the journal with you and give you feedback. You may need someone else to “give you permission” to take some time off.

Eliminate things that are not necessary. March to the mission that Jesus called you to do, not to the mission that others want you to do for them.

Involve the local church board and staff in your decision to make your family a priority. This does not mean that you ask their permission for time off; rather, it means that they are informed and involved in the process. Your church members should then be informed. Remember, your family can be a role model for other families in the church regarding this important topic.

Make sure that roles, expectations, and expectations of all your church officers are clearly defined. If it is not your job, cut it out of your schedule! Let other church leaders do their jobs, and you do yours. Do not take someone else's ministry away from them. Every pastor needs to add one item to their current job description: *commitment to my own family.*

3. Set limits on time for regular church office/work time

What is a reasonable amount of time for staff development, to sit on committees, to meet with church members, sermon preparation, and other items? In one survey of lay people, the answers to this question averaged 82 hours per week—an incredibly great amount of time. One church member even proposed that the pastor may work 200 hours per week.

There will be those special events or times, such as during an evangelistic series, when you may have no choice but to work many hours. But at the end, reward yourself and your family with some special alone time together. This will give you all a treat to look forward to as you dedicate yourself to ministry at those particular times.

4. Guard and protect boundaries

Set and lovingly communicate parameters to your church family in order to protect your private family time, and encourage them to do the same. A good minister will always respond to legitimate emergencies, but it is important to define an emergency. Be candid with your church about how they can expect you to respond to various crises. What is an emergency? What is a crisis? Defining these terms ahead of time will help you identify those instances that may, or may not, need immediate attention. Some “emergencies” can, in fact, wait. Your clearly communicated responses will diffuse misunderstandings before they develop and often prevent the manipulation of your time. Establish a day off each week and make sure that all your church family is aware of what time has been set aside.

Guarding your boundaries requires action. Put your computer and phone aside when you are with your spouse or children. You do not have to answer every call immediately. Preserve your family meal times. Eating together as a family is an important time to talk and share about the day’s happenings, challenges, joys, and tomorrow’s events.

5. A regular schedule makes crises easier to bear

If you have a regular day off with your family and take time to give them a place of importance in your schedule, then when a real crisis arises that takes you away, these kinds of events will be easier to bear.

6. Mentor others

Delegate as much as possible to other church leaders. Trust and train them to do the job that the nominating committee has elected them to do. Allow them to serve. Do not take service opportunities away from your church members because you feel you can do it better or faster. Help out the church family and yourself by sharing in ministry.

If you are too busy, you are probably not delegating. Train and trust people to coordinate and lead programs and events. Investing time in the training of others will not only save you hours, but fulfill the scriptural guidance offered in Ephesians 4:11, 12:

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (NIV).

7. Schedule family time in your calendars now

Schedule your vacation early in the year. Many of our ministerial families lose vacation time because they are too busy to take it. There may never be a “good time” but this must be a priority.

Schedule one night every week with your spouse, a kind of “date night.” When God created Adam, He said it was not good for him to be alone. So He gave Adam a wife, not a whole church family.

Here is a formula that may be good to adopt: Spend at least 30 minutes each evening together, one entire evening each week, one day each month, and one weekend each quarter.

Schedule one evening with the entire family. Remember to make each child feel special. Try to schedule time with each child alone. When you are traveling, remember to call home and speak to your spouse and to each child.

One minister offers his family his daily planner to have first choice for them to fill in the time they want with him. He sacredly guards the time they have agreed on, even declining to chair important meetings. He tells a story of a church board member spotting his car near the beach and seeing him playing on the beach with his kids when he had previously told him that he was not available to meet. This experience gave the minister an opportunity to testify to his own family and the church of the importance of making his family a priority.

8. Take time for yourself

Take time for yourself to renew and recommit your relationship to God. As a spiritual leader, you must take the time to grow spiritually.

Get needed rest each night. You will be profitable for no one if you are not mindful that your body needs rest and renewal through sleep.

Our families are our most important treasures and God-given gifts on this earth. How sad it will be when we get to heaven if our family members are missing. We must begin today to make them a priority so that we can spend eternity together.

Visit www.thrivingpastor.org for articles, talks and other resources to grow pastors in view of healthy family relationships.

This site is run by Focus on the Family and while not Adventist still has some very helpful resources.

Read the following blog:

- Do you think the ideas expressed here are realistic?

The Desperate Pastor Blog

Balancing Ministry and Family



It's one of the most frequent questions I field, and it's always asked so sincerely, even desperately: "How do you balance ministry and family?"

My answer: I don't.

In fact, I think the very question reveals the problem. There IS no balance. It is NOT an either/or issue. There's nothing to balance. And thinking that there is is a problem in and of itself.

I say to young men and women considering or embarking upon ministry, "Your family IS your ministry. Your marriage, your children--that's where your ministry BEGINS and ENDS. Never allow yourself to think that your family is somehow in conflict or competition with your ministry. If you do, the devil will play you like a fiddle, and you may very well lose both in the end."

What is your ministry? To preach? Then let your home be your primary pulpit.

To love the church, and to love lost souls? Then practice and perform those offices at home more than anywhere.

Is it to teach? Then let your children be your first and best disciples.


Is it to care and show compassion? Then do it first and foremost for your spouse and children.

Is it to pray? Then spend yourself in the prayer closet FOR your family and WITH your family.

Is it to facilitate the gifts of others? To train others for ministry? To build a community of faith? Then do it first for your household, and then (and only then) for the household of faith.

There is no place for balance between family and ministry. If you neglect your family for the church, then you are an example to neither. If you lose one, you lose the other. If you are not taking care of your family, you have no business leading the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 12).

So don't balance anything here. Instead, make your marriage and family the first recipients of the grace of God that is in you, and the calling with which he has called you.

Posted by Hoss at [2/12/2011](#) 

Ten Tips For Balancing Your Ministry and Family: Help For the Tug-Of-War

By Greg Leith

I slipped into his room late one evening when I arrived home from work. He was still awake, snuggled under the covers.

"Hey, Dad, it's Wednesday," my 12-year-old said. "Tonight was our date night, Dad. You forgot."

Somewhere between the deadlines, donors, and to-do list, I had forgotten the most important ministry God had entrusted to me — my family. It had been weeks since my wife and I had a date together, just the two of us, without our work worlds on the agenda. I knew things needed to change and fast. Instead of focusing on work, I needed to focus on my family and let them know they were as important as my ministry work

FAMILY MATTERS

We set out to meet our ministry goals and somehow in the midst of our work we forget a young boy is waiting at home to play catch, a teen-age girl is waiting to talk about boys, and a spouse is waiting to be treated with the attention she received when you were dating. Why does it happen? How does it happen? How can you prevent it from happening to you? Why do we feel we need to work so long and hard? What is the prize you are striving for? Is it possible the prize has edged out your precious family or the spouse you were madly in love with during your courtship days? They need your best time, not your leftover time.

Recently I met a ministry leader for a cup of coffee. In between sips of Starbucks®, the truth about his family came out. Similar scenarios have occurred many times before with other ministry leaders. The leader I was meeting with told me where things were with his ministry. The ministry was doing well, but his family was suffering. Later, he temporarily stepped aside from his ministry to focus on his family until things turned around. I was glad he did this, but surprised that I had witnessed another incident where ministry had edged out a leader's family.

If we were sitting at a Starbucks near your house talking about your day, I would ask you a personal question. What is the prize you are striving for? Is it possible the prize has edged out your precious family or the spouse you were madly in love with during your courtship days? They need your best time, not your leftover time.

TEN TIPS

Before the Starbucks gets cold and we both need to run, it is time for a rebalancing of ministry and family. Here are 10 ideas to jump-start your thinking and help you get back on track.

1. Get your family together and craft a family mission statement. It is just as important to be intentional as a family as it is to be where you work. We wanted our family to understand why we were here on earth and what principles would govern our time together. We wanted a grid for decision making and conflict to pass through. Need a head start? Here is ours:

“Our family is going through life's journey together, growing roots in Christ and wings for our mission — to become equipped to make a difference in our world by learning to live like Jesus, for Jesus, and in Jesus.”

We have designed other elements of this mission statement into the shape of a house with walls of laughter, doors of prayer, and windows of other important character traits.

2. Plan time for your family each week in advance. Put it on your calendar. Stop believing you need to get one more thing done before you leave for home. Plan your week with specific ending times and stick to them.

3. Jettison things from your schedule that are not important. March to the mission Jesus called you to, not the mission others want you to do for them.

4. If your work situation requires constant excessive hours to get the job done, it is time to evaluate other ways to accomplish the task. You cannot accomplish the mission of the organization single-handedly, so stop trying. Ask the Lord to send workers into your harvest field and then watch Him go to work. Pray for supernatural results from the time you put into your day, then go home and be a minister to the other mission field God gave you — your family.

5. If you lead others, have your people write into their job descriptions the need to be committed to their family and specifically how they will do it.

6. Develop an activity with your entire family or with individual family members. For example, hiking, a date at Denny's for breakfast on Saturday, or coffee with your spouse where you pray together for your day. As you do this, remember teachable moments are almost like intentional accidents — they happen — but not always because you planned them. Be sure to plan large quantities of time throughout the year so teachable moments will have a chance to occur.

7. Create a spiritual-life development plan for each of your children by outlining their strengths, their areas needing improvement, and your plans to shape their character as they grow under your care. Our children are arrows that are being sent to a world we

cannot fully see. Our job is to shape our children into arrows that will fly straight and travel the distance to the Kingdom target God intends for them.

8. Schedule an hour each week with each child and your spouse and focus only on them. Getting together with family members does not need to be expensive; time together is the critical ingredient here. When our budget has been tight, I have spent time in my backyard with my son.

9. When you are traveling, send an e-mail or a postcard to your family. Call them on the phone and pray with them in addition to chatting.

10. At the end of the day, ask your kids or spouse three questions: "What happened today that you are proud of?" "What happened today that you wish you could do over?" "Where did you see God in your day today?" When I speak to men about fatherhood at FamilyLife marriage weekends, I ask men to use single words that describe their memories of their fathers. Many of the words used are negative words such as "absent," "domineering," and "detached." If your children were asked to describe your parenting, or if your spouse was reviewing your life at your funeral service, what words would they use? If you are not happy with the words they would use, it is time to make some changes in how you lead your family. If you are the man in your family, do not abdicate the work of family leadership to your wife. Leadership is not to be shouldered solely by her. Get involved.

Eugene Petersen's **The Message** says, "Exploit or abuse your family, and end up with a fistful of air" (Proverbs 11:29).

When my work years come to an end and the castles of my ministry stand tall and strong, I want to be holding more than air. Are you pleased with the investment you have made in building your family and your marriage? If the answer is no, why not leave this article and make a few important dates with your kids and your spouse. "Hey Dad. I passed," says my 15-year-old daughter." I am writing this from the Department of Motor Vehicles. I came here with my daughter to get her driving permit. Some days you cannot balance, so lately I have been working on **integration** — aren't laptops great? As my daughter and I celebrated her passing the test with a big hug in the lobby, I was glad I had decided the to-do list at work could wait. The memory of this morning with her will last forever.

Enrichment journal Q1, 2006.

Family Issues

Family Fridays: Creating Traditions for the Pastor's Family

Creating Traditions for the Pastor's Family by John M. De Marco

At times life as a pastoral family seems packaged in a large resealable freezer bag — overrun with leftovers.

Church life, particularly during seasons such as Christmas and Easter, teems with obligations that often keep the pastor within the church far more than in the parsonage. Even when the rest of the family throws itself into the congregational whirlwind, there comes a gradual aching for quality time together away from the crucible of spiritual celebration and multifamily confluence.

Some believe the unwritten rule that pastors' families simply must settle for less quality time than other families. Unhealthy marriages and parent-child relationships result, and ultimately, unfulfilling ministries is the natural byproduct.

Carving traditions

Pastors' families must intentionally carve out time for activities that help them grow together, enjoy each other, rest and be carefree. In particular, traditions can help families build fond memories and construct a foundation of strength and purpose that both the parents and the children can tap into through the years.

The church itself seems to have a fairly strong grasp on traditions. As the body of Christ we passionately cling to sacraments such as the Lord's Supper and baptism. We rest upon cornerstones such as the Apostles' Creed and Easter and Christmas cantatas — rituals that remind us of who we are as the church.

A family can learn from the church by building activities to help foster a keen sense of identity and vital fellowship. Though the typical tradition-forming of holidays doesn't afford much time to pastors' families, monthly traditions can be celebrated other times during the year. They do not have to be complicated, expensive or planning-intensive. The secret is intentionality, vision and a family who longs for bonding in their home.

Dining and dialogue. Perhaps on the first Friday of each month share a special meal. Eating together builds understanding and good favor. It is one of the highest peaks of hospitality. Families too often see eating on the same level as teeth-brushing. Eating together is relational. The time invested in sitting down at the same table will nourish hearts long after food has nourished bodies.

Make the meal fun. Allow each family member a turn to decide what the courses will be. Then spoil the chooser during his or her turn. The rest of the family should do the food shopping, preparing or cleanup.

Reel interaction. For the second Friday night of the month, watch a movie together, preferably at home. Again, choose a family member each month to select the movie (with parents' discretion) and the snacks. But make it more than just two hours sitting in front of the television. Converge entertainment and critical thinking by assigning another family member to conduct questions and discussion. Any film that is decent will evoke thoughts about some of life's issues.

Fun competition. For Friday No. 3, play games. Again, each member gets a turn to choose the game. Too often families drop such play when children move toward the teen years, but such play teaches sportsmanship, strategy, critical thinking, and so forth. These intangibles will pay important dividends across the spectrum of life's challenges. Plus, games are fun, and the memories will stir children to pass it on to their own offspring someday.

Hosting outreach. Finally, an outreach night could be a great way for families to spend the fourth or fifth Friday together. Still enjoying the sanctuary of their own home, the family can invite others over for an evening activity. The person(s) may be facing a hard situation, may not know the Lord or be new to town. The purpose of the evening is to provide hospitality, service, love and encouragement to those who might need it. It is also for the family to learn compassion and giving.

The people you invite over do not have to be church members. They could be those you encounter as you build relationships beyond the church walls. Be careful not to turn the evening into another night of church ministry, but view it as a way for your pastor's family to participate in the call to disciples as a *Christian* family.

Pastors' families can enjoy hundreds of different traditions. The answer is finding the traditions that build good relationships, strength and love in your home. Intentionality is the secret, because families do not build their identities and memories by accident.