

## 8 Time Drainers of pastors and staff (and 8 solutions)



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The statement came from a pastor, but he only made it half-jokingly: “The greatest gift you could give me is more time.”

Of course, he didn’t think I could create days with more than 24-hours. Still, he was busy, over-committed, and worn out. He wondered if I had any suggestions. And, he is not alone.

What if I told you I could help you get 10 or more hours of your week back? That’s like having an extra three weeks a year.

### **Cutting inefficiency**

In order to make this quest a reality, let’s look at some of the greatest “time drainers” of pastors and staff—as well as suggestions for improving each situation.

**1. Regularly scheduled meetings.** How many hours do you spend in meetings you feel obligated to attend? Probably a lot.

**Solution:** Ruthlessly evaluate all mandatory meetings. You can probably eliminate two or more. And never add a regularly scheduled meeting without eliminating another.

**2. Add-on meetings.** “Pastor, can we get together this week to talk about something?” How many times have you received similar requests? Think of the time expended scheduling the meeting, attending, and possibly following up.

**Solution:** Say no. Tell the person you will talk about it right then. The conversation will likely be shorter than five minutes.

**3. Non-productive meetings.** Have you ever ended a meeting thinking it was a total waste of time? Perhaps most of the meeting was a waste of time.

**Solution:** Never go into a meeting without a clear and specific agenda. Also, have a definitive ending time and don’t go one minute beyond.

**4. Telephone calls.** Many of you are constantly answering the phone. You get started on one project, only to be interrupted.

**Solution:** Get a second phone number to share with church members. There are some services and apps that offer a free number. I use Google Voice. Any call to Google Voice goes to voicemail, where I decide later how to handle it.

**5. Social media complexity.** Some pastors and staff constantly interact with church members on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and other social media. I wouldn’t be surprised if it consumes 10 to 15 hours a week.

**Solution:** Stop it! You have no obligation to respond on social media. Get rid of the guilt trip and get your time back.

**6. “Old school” secretaries.** The world of support staff has changed dramatically. If you have a secretary who is stuck in the 1990s or 2000s, you are wasting time; that secretary provides you no efficiencies.

**Solution:** Get a productive assistant. If your church cannot afford one, check into a virtual assistant.

**7. Time in the car.** Depending on hospital visits or commute, you could spend a lot of time in your car.

**Solution:** If possible, select a specific day to do hospital visits, so you don’t interrupt your other days continuously. Also, make the most use of your time in your auto. I love Audible books by Amazon. For less than \$10, I choose a new book every month. My learning curve has gone up again!

**8. Counseling.** I know one pastor who counsels more than 20 hours a week. Needless to say, he is burning out as he tries to carry out other responsibilities.

**Solution:** Most pastors and staff are neither trained nor equipped to do counseling. Stop it and refer requests to those who can. Limit counseling to one-time sessions and spiritual counseling.

### **A unique gift**

Time is a gift from God. It is not to be wasted or abused. Go through these eight items again, and see if there are some areas where you can gain back time.