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This reminds me of another conference. A pastor was waiting to get up, and some took the chance to leave early after supper. The song leader got up and led a song and introduced the speaker. As he did so, the speaker got up, the song leader got up, got some left over salad and left. When he turned around, he saw only one elderly gentlemen in that auditorium. He thanked him, but then the elderly man says, "I'd appreciate it if you'd hurry up. I was asked to give the closing prayer." Thank you to the local churches, the benevolence has been overwhelming. The food has been wonderful. I'm a little biased because the little lady behind the registration is my daughter.

I don't know if I need a rake or leaf blower for clean-up, and I'll let you decide which I used first. I know it's going to go out the window, and I pray God would somehow bring this all together. From the very beginning, the heart of the Father to the call of the Father. I was touched this morning by the servant leader.

2 Peter 3:10-14, please stand. [Read the passage. Pray.] You may be seated. Knowing the certainty of God's judgment, how ought we to live? Eternal life brings an eternal perspective. I'll read 2 Timothy 2:15, the one we've been keying in on. God is not satisfied with my belief, he wants my obedience. The diligent workmen. Diligent, hard working, industrious, assiduous, painstakingly reliable. Some people have suggested, "That could be a resume for me!" I think our culture has a good reputation of being down-to-earth hard working people. We are industrious, reliable, privilege is as it relates to our Jesus ministry. Was Jesus diligence while walking on earth in uniform? Yes! Was Jesus rushing around from place to place to place to place? Yes and no. We do know he took time out to pray. He took time to be by himself. He took time to enjoy friends, going to a wedding. He also persuades Martha that spending time was more appropriate and more timely and important than getting all the decorations in place. To stop and listen and to spend time, stop, listen, and spend time. I want you to think, we're going to view that. I confess to you as a pastor; that little phrase to take time and listen, to spend time and listen, is for me. I struggle with continual overload. My own doings, I know. I'm always in continued overload. Sometimes, it seems, the only time I pray is when I'm on the run, on a 'pastoring run.' Many can relate to what I'm saying. As you consider diligent work, what comes to mind? If I ask you, "Are you a diligent workman?" It's an in-your-face question. James? You put up your defenses. Of course you do. You start thinking, Yes, but I have limitations.

Limitations, of time, resources. Yet I need to spend time, time out.

I know you relate to that, I think you do. Personally, I sometimes feel like a squeezed lemon. You think there's no more left to give, no more else to do. Out of default responsibility, you squeeze, they squeeze, we all squeeze. We risk it being bitter. So pastors, I deduct, I need to spend more time out with the Father. As I fall to the floor, the fountain and source of Holy Spirit power, I would feel more energized rather than squeezed, more passionate rather than obligatory, powered rather than fatigued.

I'm going to address a pretty sensitive subject. Does our use of time equate to being a tent-making pastor? I want you to hear my heart on this, and don't hear the messenger too quick. We have a wonderful heritage, culture, and practice. The plural ministry is a great benefit and must. Not the only way to do it, but I like it. The minister is meant to divide the work. My pastors are all busy. The limitations of time, does this equate to being tent-making pastors? Paul chose to be a tent-making pastor. My culture and church chose that before I was ordained for me. I'd like to believe I would have chosen the same. I like to sweat with my people. The negative situation in our practice is an over-involvement in business pursuits. We all assume someone else is going to do it, and no one does it.

Raymond once told me, Lonnie, there's no comparable way I can compare what you're doing in your ministry to what I did in mine. Somehow, I do pastoring. You've heard and I've heard about tent-making pastors. They are only ordained businessmen who show up on Sunday mornings to preach. You all have a first aid kit? That hurts. I hope we don't deserve that compound. Just as the government needs to review the original Constitution, maybe we need to review our practice. I understand Paul's tent-making to be a means to an ends. I'm not necessarily advocating Pauls' choice of circuit preaching any more than I follow his choice of marriage. Mark Gingerich isn't here, is he? Is it fair for us to consider our situations for today? Unless you misunderstand my challenge. You've heard, don't mess with my money. The love of money reaches every tax income level. Possibly and probably the blue collar, middle class, day laborer, maybe more susceptible to loving money than the one who has already attained. The challenge is, can I adjust?

The challenge is, can we adjust preventative maintenance, especially as it applies to church issues and human relationships. Most of us learn by default, ER pastors. I'm going around putting band aids on people. Some of that is going to happen. Would it not be better to reconsider preventative, spiritual therapies that would keep people healthy? Would it not be better to be engaged Monday-Saturday, and not just on Sunday. This will mean less hours in the barn, office, job site. What were the early church leaders trying to say in their practice of tent making? I did make a pledge four years ago to that pledge. It had great benefit for me. I showed up unannounced on the jobsite. They weren't scared to see me, for no other reason than I care. Know what? The time, I got squeezed and squeezed. I've lost my passion and vision for those high ideas. I need to come back and begin again.

Management of time is our own making: "I have to for no choice of my own need to work. Numero one is providing for my family." We have mortgages, the new car, and condo, the four star hotels, I'm exaggerating for effect, you know my direction. Whose bar are we using? What's

important here? Seek ye first financial security. Seek ye first the kingdom of God and all of these things shall be added unto you. What am I saying? I'm leaving a lot of loose ends tonight. I'm supposed to bring this together. In tent-making pastoring, don't be afraid to serve God because you need to pay your mortgage. Just step out and see what God does. I'm not asking full time. I don't think Paul was a businessman that showed up on Sunday mornings. Pastor, I resolve to be more diligent in the kingdom work for God, trusting for my needs.

When Jesus showed up 2000 years ago, how did he find his church? His nation? The Jewish people? Did he find them diligent? Diligent in what? Religious drills. Everything was weighed and judged as it applied to the commandments of men. They made for doctrine the commandments of men. They made what we consider practical applications; they made practical applications of the laws of Yahweh. Addendum on addendum on addendum on addendum. They lost. Diligence as it applies to the diligence to the forefathers. They tangoed with Jesus. We be of Paul. We be of Appolos. Did this make the forefathers wrong? No. This is about the nature of man who becomes prideful about the application of God's principles. They were religious, not faithful. They were hypocrites. There was pride and not humility. They were frisking instead of fishing for me.

How does this apply to being a diligent workman? (I need a glass of water). Are we... I am a Beachy, I am of Maranatha, I am of Berea. I am of Mennonite. Does that make our identities wrong? No. Neither are they the total, secure answer. You and I, pastors, are pastoring youth that are more intelligent and academic than we; I didn't say wise. I as a pastor want to give them reliable, pertinent answers. Current to their situation. I do not think they are willing to walk in someone else's life line. Are they only content to live out the edicts only pertinent to that generation? Every generation needs the experience of the Holy Spirit. Have our forefathers done something wrong? No, but we need it for ourselves today. present, current, contemporary. As a diligent pastor, my foremost purpose is to know the father as the forefathers know the father. We still today reap benefits of our faithful forefathers, diligent forefathers. With all due respect to our forefathers. They were hewed, as are we. I'm not one who criticizes the past, please hear my heart. Their forefathers criticized their forefathers. Every time change comes up, there's a war. But they may change. We call them good. In my short history. I've worked this adaption work under the Lord Jesus Christ and how the work applies in 2010. He can do it. He has answers for us today. They may be applied slightly differently than they were in our forefather's day. The question I leave with you, are we satisfied with the results we have. I have history, we have greater history. Are we happy with the results of what has happened? But if we continue to do things that same way, we get the same result. As it relates to what? Have we met our goals? Actually, what are our goals? Actually, do we have any goals? Understand, I'm not being harsh. I just want to keep you engaged

Has our focus in diligence been misguided or selfish, possibly? Our need for a very private school. Our need for exclusive activities. Have we worked so diligently at external separation and identity that we now wake up to find we formed an exclusive religious club, not too different from when Jesus showed up? A religious club. Am I being diligent for the work of the kingdom? Am I being a fisher of men or am I aimlessly following what may have worked for a past generation and pertinent for a past generation? Let's diligently, passionately see God for what works for our generation. How can we be more effective than pastoring our own? We all want to

do this, it's the heart of all us pastors.

Let me change directions a bit, cover some of the things they asked me to address.

Some of you may remember, after a long court battle, [name] finally won the right to enter the cadet problem at the all male school. Soon she dropped out and we haven't heard from her since. She was a quitter. Were you expecting a punch line? That's what inspiration quitters have. Paul said, I have finished the course. There's room for us. Finishing the race is critically important. You know, I'm inspired by my father, and lots have gone before. I see those here, grey heads, who have set the marks for us. We can't lay down and say we're satisfied there. We have to finish the race. I'm not a marathon runner, but the runner tells us there are two critical points. You feel so good you risk over-expending yourself, and at the end, you don't have any left. Any application for us pastors? We start out with great promise. The second critical point is the half way point. You've got another half to go and you're tired. You're tired, runners hitting the wall. You've come to the end of your endurance, and you don't know if you can put another foot in front of the other. We've seen it all over, marriages, to pastors. I've seen it to extraordinary pastors. Have you experienced it? We're told to run with perseverance, but you know what, you've got to do a gut check? Are we experiencing burn out? So spent, then some small situation comes up and your whole ministry is teetering on the brink. Many have scandal, misunderstanding. Many of you were not different than me. Let me qualify that. I'm a pusher, mover. I have more drive than sense. I love being a pastor. I feel called of God, the urgency of God, to make a difference in people's lives. I resonate with Tim Yoder yesterday morning because he's my friend, but I didn't have the same experience. I love to serve; it's not a duty, but a passion. But I have limitations. I'm told people are supposed to sleep. Some new study. I have a family, bride. I'm gaining folks, fainting, seemingly diminishing. Burnout.

Galatians 6:9. Some of us are weary of over-doing. Burnout seems to be an expected role of pastors. Is that right? If we are going to be spent, let's be spent for Christ. He also asks us to be good stewards of our body. Thanks Adam, Eve. We'll deal with it. Much of the chagrin to those who are doing the miracle juices, we have limitations. My wife is probably guilty of extortion getting it into me.

If and when is a sabbatical necessary or appropriate? Is there a Biblical precedence? This is an afterthought on my subject. I don't know what God is doing to me, but the last six weeks, I'm having symptoms of emotional attack, not because there are problems, I'm a pastor who thinks he can do everything 24/7, and I don't want change. I don't want to lose my passion, but I'm losing my passion. Would it be wise to at least consider opening the idea to sabbatical? Jesus did immediately after baptism. He took 40 day hiatus to the wilderness. Tell me about the devil—comma—angels came to minister to him. How many have taken 40 days off just to be with God? I've not! I've made a request in the last week, in the last week, and we may go through with it.

Some points to consider—delegate: the gift of the plural ministry. I've got the best team out there; we're all busy. We're not just spiritual comrades on the team. I need them. Whether they or church laity. I believe it would do well for us to engage them. A busy church membership is a healthy church. More than that, can we bend our culture just a bit and consider the power of affirmation? As a pastor, the power of affirmation, affirming our associates, our church members

has an effect on them and their faith. The little ones, the lambs, I know every child by name, shake their hand. What about the adults? They have the same need as the children. We need to engage them. We need to affirm them. It's counterculture for us to praise, encourage, honor a job well done. It seems our culture gave us a myth, as we do what Jesus did, and that was affirm people. In delegating, play the role of "pastor-coach." Encourage them in the ministry. It's amazing what people will do when you believe in them, when you tell them they can do it. As an ending part, would our marriages survive if we treated our bride as "We'll see you next Sunday" or "you will do that." "How dare you make that decision—I'm the bishop, minister, deacon." God did not ordain me as the sound man, the trustee, the Sunday School leader. They are just as good as me. They may be better at it than we are.

Reaching to those things that are before. I press towards the prize. Jesus was persecuted, but he went on and paid the price and ran the race. He's asking us, when we get weary, we are to fix our eyes on Jesus when you get to where I'm at. Every pastor needs to hear this. It's so easy to give up, to quit, to say, 'I don't have to do that anymore.' If you take the tour in Williamsburg, VA. They'll tell you why when you go to a court and they swear you in, know the history of that? Story goes back to medieval times when someone was tried against a crime and evidence was against him. There was one way out. You could plead the benefit of clergy. When a convict was accused, and that was the only way out, you could plead the benefit of clergy, a clergy was brought in, turn to Psalm 51, and if he could read without stammering, he was set free. He was only allowed once to proclaim it. They would brand a cross on his right hand forever. He only ever claims it but once in his life.

One day, we too will stand before the judge of the earth, guilty as can be. We can plead that; plead the benefit of the cross. It's our only hope. I don't know where you are. I want to always want to be the passionate service-leader Eli spoke about today.

Little illustration: last Wednesday my bride needed to go see a new place and she doesn't know how to get there. We have a little GPS gifted to us. She's learned the basics. I turned it on, put it on the dash. She needed to go to point A to B. It took her to her first place and then took her to the second place. Fast forward, time to come home. She is set for the address, and it starts spitting our cyber profanity. It's set on loud because her husband is hard of hearing. She hits the power button, but you have to hold it. She hits it, it doesn't go off. It continues to spew out all kinds of edicts, directives, and she peels it off the dash and throws it under the driver seat. Still barking out edicts. She turns up the CD, overrides the noise with better noise.

So many illustrations. That little GPS, the Bible, rightly applied, works. It is not silent, it speaks, directions, directives, instructions, gotta rightly apply it, take us where we need to go. We need direction. We're under authority. I need direction. Be diligent and run the race with patience. Don't run the race with impatience. Keeping running what is set before.

Many of you know some of the difficulties our congregation went through in the past four years. I buried not only a church member, but a wonderful friend, Brother Mark. I'm engaging with his oldest son, he was in my barn last Wednesday night. He's grieving helpfully. He said, "Lonnie, sometimes I call my own phone." He inherited his father's cell phone. "because I want to hear my dad's strong voice on the answering machine." How desperate are we to hear the voice of

God, that strong voice. Pastors, that's where I'm at. I need to get a handle of God on my life. I can't do it on my own; you can't do it on my own. I need an infusion of God. I need his voice, his GPS, and the patience of the whole congregation. I'd like to covenant my life in a new way. Together, with my spouse, we rejuvenate; we serve again with a passion. Tonight, maybe you feel the same. I feel like I need assistance even now, maybe we'll call people out to pray. If we want to stand as a commandment to pray, that is, we want Him number one. And we want to pastor, and take, there are some abuses to being pastors, but if you love, truly love, does it matter? Moses, how often was he guilty? He struck the rock. I wish I could claim one sin. Often did he say, God, spare your children, take me out of it. Spare them. They are just trying to find their ways, they need to know that people care, and we cut them off because they did not fit in the box we made for them. Let's run the race with patience. We have to finish the race faithfully. If you want to stand with me. Eli, you had the shepherd's prayer. The rest of you want to stand where you are.