

# Something to Talk About – A conversation guide for church leaders

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## Are We Using Our Time Wisely?

*Note: This is the fourth in an ongoing series of postings intended to facilitate and serve as a guide for church leaders' conversations about significant issues that often are not talked about among pastors, boards, and church leadership teams*

I've been to all kinds of time management courses. Through them all, I've emerged with one truth stuck in my mind – we cannot manage time. Time just is. It continuously flows. It's untamable, unrelenting, and unstoppable. Only in games can we call a "time out" and stop the clock. Time cannot be managed. We can, however, manage ourselves in such a way as to use what time we have wisely.

People and organizations have things in common. Among them is the truth that both often become stuck in routines and habits. Habits and routines can be helpful when they serve to organize and create efficiencies and effectiveness in our lives – that's likely why they were started in the first place. They can become harmful, however, when we use time to mindlessly follow routines after they no longer are providing the benefits they once did.

As leaders, are we using the time that we have wisely? Are we wisely using the time we have together with our leadership teams? Have we gotten ourselves stuck doing things that waste precious time? Like a leaking faucet, are we letting time drip, drip, drip away?

Here are some things we might want to talk about to help us identify time-wasters that may have crept into our personal or organizational lives. These questions are not intended to be guilt producing nor to compare yourself to others. They should be asked in the context of you, serving God, in this season of your life. For best results, be realistic rather than utopian.

As an individual:

1. Are there some things that I believe I really should be doing that I often feel I don't have the time to do? What are they, and why are they important to you? Don't forget time for rest, relaxation and renewal.
2. Are there some things that I routinely do that take up my time yet don't produce discernable benefit? What are they, and how much time do I invest in them? How might I use this unproductive time to do some of the things that I should be doing but don't seem to have the time to do?
3. In my service as a pastor, elder, or other church leader, *within my unique ministry context*, are there some things that I believe I really should be doing that I often don't seem to have

the time to do? Are there some things that I am doing that don't produce discernable benefits that I can stop doing? Are there some things that do need to be done that I could ask someone else do or do less often?

As a leadership team, when we meet together:

1. Are there parts of our meetings that seem repetitious, boring, and meaningless? What are they and why do we feel that way? If the task actually has some importance, is there some other way to do it? Can we do it less often?
2. What are some of the things that we think we should be doing that we never seem to have enough time together to do? Why should we be doing them, and what is the cost to the church for us not doing them?
3. When we are together, do we tend to invest the most time on the more important things?
4. During our meetings, what do we do that we wish we didn't do, and what don't we do that we wish we did do?
5. Are there parts of our time together that could be done well enough through electronic media that might free time for other important things?
6. Do we invest enough time in building interpersonal relationships growing together within our leadership team?
7. Are there things we do that cause us to focus too much on the present and not enough on the mission, vision, and future? How do we stop or minimize time used to do them?

Every leader I know feels they are so busy that they believe some things they perhaps should be doing are not getting done because they don't have the time to do it. In a world where there is more to do than any of us can do, that is to be expected. We cannot afford to waste useful chunks of the time that we have on doing things that do not benefit.

Are we using our time wisely? That's something to talk about.

*Let us know how your conversation goes. Contact Bob Osborne by e-mail at [bob@efcawest.org](mailto:bob@efcawest.org).*