

Right or Wrong? Pastor's time management

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Our pastor has been invited to teach part-time at a nearby Baptist university. Some of our members insist this will take too much of his time, and he counters this will enhance our community's view of our church. How can we resolve this disagreement peacefully?

Your concern has merit. I have taught for Logsdon Seminary, both on the main campus in Abilene and the extension site in Lubbock. Teaching adjunctively requires the pastor to carve additional time out of the schedule, and the responsibilities of teaching do not fall into the normal stream of a pastor's life. Time is required in preparation, classroom teaching and grading. A portion of your pastor's time will be required.

Toward resolving your concerns, my suggestion is that you ask the deacon leadership or the personnel committee—whichever group responsibly relates to your pastor—to discuss with your pastor the requirements of both obligations. You need to gauge the expectations of the university regarding adjunct professors and the time required to fulfill pastoral responsibilities at your church. Your pastor will recognize both of these dynamics, but the awareness that members of the congregation have legitimate concerns will help him balance all of his obligations.

I have a hunch. Other than the classroom time, your pastor will spend very little time on teaching obligations that might otherwise be spent in church-related ministry. Most of my preparation, reading and grading take place in the late evening to early morning hours. These tasks often fill hours when I might be tempted to give my mind over to some silly television show. I am both challenged and rescued by the additional classroom responsibilities.

Teaching adjunctively will bolster both your pastor and your church. Venturing back to the classroom will force your pastor to stay current in the academic world of biblical studies and streams of global Christian thought. Surprisingly, with the daily demands of ministry, it often is difficult for a pastor to stay current with recent scholarship. As the late ethics professor Guy Greenfield would say, "You can look at a pastor's library and discover the year his brain died." Teaching on occasion will help your pastor stay current and engaged in academia, and that will be a blessing to your church. If your pastor is relevant in the classroom, he will be relevant in the pulpit.

It is a compliment to your church and your pastor that a local Baptist university recognizes the example you share together. If your pastor is viewed as a competent and credible teacher, it is a reflection on the ministry of your church. Celebrate the fact you share in a ministerial reputation that is viewed as worthy to be passed along to students. Take the time and effort to work out a responsible agreement; you will be glad you did.

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?Right or Wrong? is sponsored by the T.B. Maston Chair of Christian Ethics at Hardin-Simmons University's Logsdon School of Theology. Send your questions about how to apply your faith to btillman@hsutx.edu.