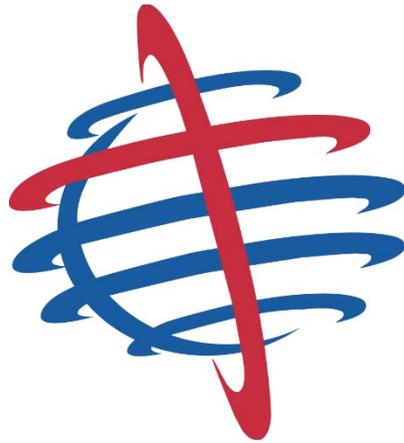


# BIVOCATIONAL MINISTRY



**It's Place & Importance in the Life of  
the Church & the Kingdom of God**

# Introduction

Bivocational Ministry seems self-defining. Yet it is a mystery to many in the church. When I think of Bivocational ministers, I'm reminded of a U.S. Marine Corps commercial I've seen often on TV. Applying the ad to these ministers, I think of "The Few . . . The Proud . . . **The Bivocational.**" Like the Marines, they are dedicated to their task; they are up to the task; they are trained to execute and complete the task; and they will get the job done! Without them, most small, rural churches would be leaderless and possibly give up and close their doors. Churches need pastors; pastors need churches.

Generally speaking a Bivocational minister is one who has a paid church position as well as, at least, one other paid job. Included in the term are many retired ministers who willingly serve small churches. He does not have to do for a local church what he does, but is moved to do it by the purest and highest motivation possible – God's calling on his life. The Bivocational are not just pastors, but also music, youth, and education ministers and even Associational Directors of Missions. For the purposes of this booklet, the term "Bivocational" will primarily refer to pastors.

"Bivocational churches" are much harder to determine. Many do not think of their church as "Bivocational" because they see their pastor as their "full-time" pastor. They do not define their church according to the pastor's other vocation. They assume that if they meet every Sunday for Bible study and worship, they are a full-time church.

So how many churches in Alabama are "Bivocational?" A rough guesstimate would be about 54% according to the annual church reports. And that percentage is growing. Actually, it would be much more than that if you count the churches with various Bivocational positions. It may well be more like 90%. Needless to say, Bivocational ministers and churches make up the majority of Alabama Baptist churches and ministers. Although they may be in the background, they are **indispensable**.

It is my hope that this little essay can shed some light on this work so it is not a mystery any longer. I hope it will be an encouragement and support to those seeking bivocational church positions and churches considering having a bivocational minister. This ministry needs to be exposed and appreciated by all.

---- **Chip Smith**, State Missionary, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

# Why be Bivocational?

Since being bivocational is a challenging lifestyle in any vocation, why would any pastor be bivocational? Here are few reasons:

## 1. Intentionally Bivocational

Frequently a pastor is led by God to be intentionally “bivocational.” He is convinced that this is his calling – to serve only as a bivocational pastor. In fact, these pastors are so certain of this that they may refuse to continue to serve in a church that has grown enough to fully fund them as pastor. They will simply resign and find another small church where they can serve bivocationally. There are intentional bivocational pastors who serve in churches that can fully fund them as pastor but they remain “bivocational” even while the other staff minister(s) is fully funded.

## 2. Out of Necessity

Often a pastor is led to a church that cannot (or will not) provide enough income to financially meet his family’s needs. This leads him to find another job so he can continue to serve where he feels God has led him.

## 3. A Church’s Pastoral Needs

Often a pastor is willing to serve so a small church can have a pastor. He feels that all churches deserve and should each have a pastor. He is concerned that “pastorless” churches will not become all that God wants His churches to be.

## 4. Paul’s Example

Like the Apostle Paul, frequently a pastor will refuse to be a financial burden to a very small church family. His desire is to follow Paul’s example and financially support himself, so then his ministry focus can be preaching, pastoral care and witnessing in the marketplace. He wants to allow his church to be financially able to invest more of its monetary resources in missions and church ministries,

## **5. Investment of His Life**

A pastor may desire to invest his life ministry into something eternal, like a small church which he knows may never be a fully-funded church. His investment is simply to serve the Lord's church regardless of size and financial ability.

## **6. Called Later in Life**

Often the God's call to serve as a pastor in a church comes later in life after he has established a successful career that provides well for his family's needs. He will serve a small church knowing that God's provisions, through his established career, will be enough to care for family necessities.

## **7. Insufficiently Challenged**

Sometimes a pastor may go to a small, rural church that can only moderately fully fund his family needs. He finds that the ministry is so small that he does not feel sufficiently challenged. He may find that a second job can be beneficial in at least two ways: (1) More adequately meet his family's financial needs and (2) Keep him busy so as not grow lazy. But to do this, it is extremely important to remember that a second job must be acceptable to the church membership (after all they feel they called a fully-funded pastor) and it must not cut into his pastoral duties. He must remember in this type of situation that his church work must be his priority.

# **Basic Facts about Bivocational Ministers**

## **1. Bivocational ministers are overworked and under paid.**

It's not hard to agree that all bivocational ministers are overworked. Anyone in any profession who has two "full-time" jobs will be over worked. Because bivocational pastors are viewed as full-time pastors by their churches and, in many situations, the other job may be full-time as well, the pastors must face this situation head-on. They must deal with it seriously and deliberately to set aside some time off. Burning the candle at both ends causes the candle to burnout prematurely. Bivocational ministry can be accomplished, but those who are most effective at it have learned to pace themselves.

The "other job" may pay well for the work done, but the pastorate probably will not. Yes, there may be exceptions to this rule, but for the most part, bivocational pastors serve small to very small churches that can't pay much. The pastor may be giving more in his tithes and offerings to the church than he gets paid by the church. It's a fact that if churches had to pay their pastors by the hour, they couldn't afford to have them.

## **2. Bivocational ministers are vital to the advancement of God's Kingdom.**

As mentioned previously, more than half of the churches would probably go out of business because they would be pastorless without the ministry of bivocational pastors. Great areas of rural population would lack the proclamation of the Gospel and the ministries of a local church.

### **3. Bivocational ministers are the very fiber of the Alabama Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention.**

This is not an overstatement. These ministers are the moral fiber of our conventions. Their character and market place witness add strength, integrity and credibility to our cooperative ministries. Why are they the fiber? Those pastors currently serving in bivocational church positions outnumber those who are fully-funded. Interestingly most currently fully-funded ministers have been in bivocational ministry at some point in their church service. Without the bivocational ministry, our conventions would be deficient in the area of our influence of our mission to the lost.

### **4. Bivocational ministers are “heroes” by definition.**

“Hero” is a word that is easily used in modern culture. In fact it is used so often in seemingly trivial matters, that it’s almost lost its true meaning. As a current saying goes, “If everyone is a hero then no one is a hero.”

What is the definition of a hero? The dictionary gives several definitions but the ones that seem to apply here are: “a person admired for contribution to a particular field,” and a person “admired for bravery, great deeds or noble qualities.” A current cultural definition may be found in comic books, TV, and movies and described as “super heroes.” All “super heroes” seem to do the same thing – they come to the rescue of a person in danger or to save the world from a perilous situation.

All of the above definitions can apply to bivocational ministers, especially the last one. Imagine a small, weak church that is in peril and in danger of shutting down its ministry. Then suddenly, as a gift from God, a bivocational minister comes to the rescue, leading the helpless, little church back to effective ministry through God’s strength and guidance.

Certainly bivocational ministers are “real heroes” by God’s definition and in the lives of so many small churches.

# Challenges of Bivocational Ministry

## 1. Self-Image

Many bivocational ministers, especially pastors, often suffer from a low self-image of their ministry. Considering the historic role and current importance that bivocational ministry has in God's Kingdom, it's hard to imagine why any bivocational ministers, especially pastors, could have even occasional feelings of low self-image. There are those who feel that "fully-funded" ministers look down on them. Whether it is true or not, the perception is very real to those who feel they have been slighted by their colleagues in the ministry. Following are a few of the reasons for low self-image stated by bivocational pastors:

### **A. Most serve small churches**

Remember that "small" is a relative term. What is large to one person may be small to another. A First Baptist Church in a rural county is often looked upon as a "big" church by the very small rural churches throughout the county. But that same "big" church will be considered small when compared to a truly large First Baptist Church in a large city. A majority of the Alabama Baptist churches run less than 50 people in attendance. Around 75% run under 100. God has blessed Alabama with a large number of small churches. Maybe it's like Abraham Lincoln once said, "The Lord prefers common-looking people. That's the reason He made so many of them."

## **B. Accent on numerical growth**

It may be human nature to believe bigger is always better. But we all know through experience that isn't true. Have you ever heard of the older brother who trades his "big" nickel for the younger brother's "little" dime?

All pastors of any size church like to see numerical growth. It's in our DNA as Baptists to be evangelistic and mission-minded. But just like Bible study, churches need to be viewed in their context. So many of the small, rural churches are in places where the population has moved away leaving few families to reach. A study has shown that about 80% of these churches give double-digit financial percentages to world, national, and state mission needs through the Cooperative Program. They are also generous to local Association ministries. As the story of the "Widow's Mite" (Mark 12:41-44) teaches, the percentage of giving is more important than the number of dollars.

While the accent may be on numerical growth, growing a "healthy church" may very well be more important.

## **C. Limited formal theological and church administration training**

Although many bivocational pastors have seminary level training, it's not an exaggeration to say most do not. There may be many reasons for not getting a full formal education: the call of God came late in life; there was not the financial means to go to seminary; family responsibilities; etc. The ministry of Amos shows that one does not have to have formal theological and church administration training to answer God's call. Consider the answer Amos gave to a critic, "I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a gatherer of sycamore fruit. And the Lord took me as I followed the flock and the Lord said unto me, 'Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.'" (Amos 7:14-15) With that said, one must also remember that if God can use an uneducated, untrained man, how much more can He use one who is formally prepared. Paul prepared for three years for his Christian ministry (Galatians 1:18) and Jesus

prepared for 18 years for a three year public ministry (Luke 2:42; 3:23). If our Lord and Paul saw the need to prepare for their ministries, surely every one called of God should prepare also.

All bivocational pastors should feel the challenge to seek every opportunity to increase their Biblical and theological knowledge, as well as, church administration training. But the final word must be, "The God who called him will equip him for where He puts him."

#### **D. "Second Class" Ministers**

Whether the bivocational pastor has actually heard others make the comment or he only assumes it has been made, he needs to remember that only he can allow himself to be "second class." God doesn't call "second class" people to carry out His work. He sees you as worthy to be His servant and so should you.

## **2. Time Management**

Time management is a tremendous challenge for bivocational pastors. In fact it is a challenge for all pastors, fully-funded or bivocational. Perhaps it is more so for bivocational. With two full time jobs, he must learn to manage his time to do all that encompasses the work of the pastorate, as well as, his other job and all it encompasses. How can it be done? Here's a few ideas.

#### **A. The Pastor Must set His Priorities**

Every busy person must set priorities if anything is going to be accomplished. This is certainly a true statement for bivocational pastors. If the bivocational pastor under God's guidance does not set his own priorities, be assured someone else will. But the priorities set by others may not reflect what is most important to God and to the pastor.

John Maxwell, author and leadership expert, gives a very good approach to use in determining your priorities. He advises that you can separate your priorities/activities into four categories:

- 1) High Importance / High Urgency
- 2) High Importance / Low Urgency
- 3) Low Importance / High Urgency
- 4) Low Importance / Low Urgency

It sounds too simple but it works for long term and short term priorities/activities. Try it and see if it will work for you.

### **B. The Pastor must learn to manage himself**

Time Management must begin first with the pastor. All people have 24 hours in each day. How much will be accomplished is really up to the pastor. Hyrum W. Smith, co-founder of Franklin Quest (now known as Franklin Covey), which sells the Franklin Covey Planner, encourages buyers to “view a daily plan as your ticket to success.”

Self-management of your time really is self-discipline. “Self-control” is listed by Paul as a “fruit of the Spirit” (Galatians 5:22). Just as the fruit identifies the tree, so should the fruit of the Spirit identify our spirituality in Christ. A tree will give to its fruit all it needs to blossom and grow and so will the Holy Spirit give Christians all they need for their fruit of the Spirit to blossom and grow. Exhibiting its fruit is not exceptional but natural for tree, just as exhibiting the fruit of the Spirit should be natural, not exceptional, in the life of every Christian minister

The self-discipline of following a God-guided plan each day can be the means of successfully having effective management of your time.

### **C. The Pastor must allow time to “sharpen the axe.”**

“Sharpen the axe” means staying physically healthy and fit. There is an occupational hazard for pastors called “fat.” Eating too much, too often is the only acceptable “sin” that churches allow their pastors to do. They not only allow it, but encourage it. And it’s not as if most pastors look “poorly.” Baptist churches seem to feel that food must be provided for every event and activity. Some now provide all members and visitors with donuts, snacks, pastries, juices, soft drinks and coffee before and/or after Sunday School, between multiple morning worship services, and post-worship services each Sunday (often on Wednesday nights, as well) in the name of fellowship or convenience. Some large churches even have secular coffee shop businesses on the grounds or in its facilities. Of course, “eating frenzies” have long existed in individual Sunday School classes. Is this a bad thing? Not necessarily. But it can help explain the pastors’ occupational hazard of over eating. Saying “no” to the constant temptation is difficult but possible. But it is especially difficult when a sweet lady brings the pastor an irresistible dish, because she knows “it’s his favorite.” And, of course, she expects him to eat it (often there in front of her so she can see and hear his delightful expressions).

Whatever the reasons, the pastor must plan and work to stay physically healthy and fit. A regular physical exercise routine will give greater energy, cause more alertness and allow him to accomplish more.

Keeping the axe edge sharp requires self-discipline but will be shown in the pastor’s life and work.

### **D. The Pastor must learn to avoid Time Wasters.**

Ways to waste time are so numerous that it would be impossible to name them all. But there is one area that pastors face regularly: Church Committee Meetings. Committee meetings are a necessary part of Baptist church administration, so they should not be totally eliminated. The

following are suggestions for committee meetings that may be helpful to avoid wasting time:

- 1) Don't have a meeting to just have a meeting.
- 2) Invite only those who need to be there.
- 3) Prepare an agenda and stick to it.
- 4) Set a time limit for the meeting.
- 5) Begin on time.
- 6) Quit when the meeting is over.

#### **E. The Pastor must employ Time Savers**

Just as there are "Time Wasters," there are also "Time Savers." The use of current technology, as well as, common sense can be used as great ways to save time. Following are a few to consider:

- 1) Computers
- 2) Cell Phones
- 3) Combine Travel – "Kill two birds with one Stone."
- 4) Limit TV time
- 5) Make a "To Do" List

This short list certainly is not novel, but employing these few ways may make a world of difference time-wise.

## **F. The Pastor must keep a “Sabbath Day.”**

The Lord introduced the “Sabbath” when he gave the manna, “bread from heaven,” to the Israelites in the wilderness. “This is what the Lord has said: ‘Tomorrow is a complete day of rest, a holy Sabbath to the Lord.’” (Exodus 16:23a *HCSB*) Speaking of man’s relationship to the Sabbath, the Lord said, “The Sabbath was made for man and not man for the Sabbath.” (Mark 2:27 *HCSB*) In the Book of Leviticus 23:3, God gives to man the following instruction, “Work may be done for six days, but on the seventh day there must be a Sabbath of complete rest.” (*HCSB*) Therefore, we understand that when God made man he was designed him for a day of rest once a week.

A dictionary definition for Sabbath is “a day of rest and worship.” For the pastor the Lord’s Day may be a day of worship but it is certainly not a day of rest. In fact Sunday is usually the busiest day of the week for pastors. Preaching the sermons each Sunday is a physical burden of stress on the human body. Many years ago the late Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs, former pastor of the First Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention and prolific Christian author, stated in a widely published article, entitled “In Praise of the Twenty-minute Sermon,” that an authority said that “the effect that the pressure on a preacher’s heart during a thirty-minute sermon is equal to that of a fifteen-mile walk”, thus his praise for preaching 20 minute sermons. Along with preaching, Sundays can be full of committee meetings, counseling sessions, and hospital and/or home visits.

**Warning:** Don’t let yourself get caught in the trap that so many pastors fall into – The Busy Pastor Syndrome. This syndrome can lead to feelings of spiritual superiority, mediocre ministry results, and just plain weariness and fatigue. Some think that never taking a day off, never taking vacation days, and spending all available time at the church make them better pastors, especially better than pastors who are weak and slothful for taking time off for rest. These busy folks are spread so thin that there is little depth in their ministry. Besides, they are so tired that in the long run their ministry may not be as effective as it could be with proper rest.

Remember the God that made us knows us better than we know ourselves- the human body must have adequate rest to function efficiently. If circumstances do not allow for going away on vacation or a day off, just doing something different can be rest.

Bottom line: The pastor who does not keep a Sabbath Day of rest may very well get an “unplanned” sabbatical. This extended time of rest may come from a heart attack, stroke, mental/emotional breakdown and/or severe physical exhaustion that may prohibit him from ever having as productive a ministry as he previously experienced.

### **3. Family Priorities**

The Bivocational Pastor’s family should NEVER be allowed to be marginalized, that is, treated as inconsequential or of little concern or attention. Even if the church views the pastor’s family as a marginal concern, only the pastor can make or allow his family to be marginalized in his life and ministry. He must always remember that his family is of utmost importance. The family unit was established by God at creation. It must not be taken lightly. Preacher’s kids (PKs) have often voiced that they felt that their “Preacher Dad” had more time for other kids in the church and community than he had for his own. The pastor’s wife can be made to feel that church committee meetings are more important than she is. While service to the God’s church may be our calling and job, it must not come at the expense of the family God gives the pastor. While many view love relationships as a ladder of love priorities (God first, church second, family third . . . and so forth), the idea of a wheel of love relationships can make more sense. Rather than his relationships being viewed as rungs on a ladder of priorities, maybe the picture of love relationships being like the spokes on a bicycle wheel attached to a center hub and flaring out from the hub to the tire may be more sensible. With God as the center hub and the spokes as our love relationships, then instead of a “first . . . second . . . third . . .” love priorities, the wheel’s spokes allow him to have a spoke for his love of God, another for his love of the church, another spoke for his

love of family, still another for his love of his job and so on representing all the different objects of our love capacity. All these different objects are loved differently, as evidenced by the different words for love in the Greek New Testament. Instead of having to decide whether he loves his children less than his wife, he can love his wife 100% and his children 100% because they are different types of love. He can love all his relationships 100% and know they are all attached to God who is the author and center of a Christian's capacity to love. "Pastor, love your family 100% through God."

### **Promote Making Room for the Pastor's/ "Your" Family**

- **Be intentional** – Family time shouldn't just happen by accident
- **Don't apologize for it** – Never be sorry for time spent with the family
- **Schedule time for it** – Be sure to keep the appointment
- **Force the issue if necessary** – there's only one shot with his children. Their childhood will only come around once. Miss it and its gone!

Remember: As a pastor, he is ***not*** indispensable to his church. When he leaves his church, it will just get another pastor and continue on. ***But*** he is indispensable to his family. Someone else can lead the church committee meeting, but no one can replace him at his child's key events. And regarding his wife, Scripture admonishes "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her." (Ephesians 5:25) Enough said!

## **4. Isolation**

The Bivocational Pastor should guard against the "Lone Ranger" syndrome. Very often he will feel that he is all alone with no ministry peers to spend time with or to confer and share with regarding ministry matters. He may feel that other pastors cannot understand his pressures and church

work, especially if they are not bivocational also. He can feel isolated for several reasons: (1) He probably is pastor of a rural congregation that may be quite far from other churches and pastors; (2) Because he has a secular job throughout the week, he is around non-church people most of the time; (3) There are few pastor meetings he can attend (such meetings are usually during the day when he is at work) and therefore he never meets other pastors; and (4) He feels “out of the loop” for denominational emphases. In the course of a week, he only has contact with his family, church family and secular co-workers. He feels lonesome in the ministry and needs relationships with other pastors.

Following are a few suggestions to avoid isolation:

- **Develop an intentional friendship with a fellow bivocational pastor/minister.**

His bivocational ministry colleagues probably feel isolated too. They would welcome the privilege to have a pastor friend that could allow them to encourage each other by having contact with someone else who understands the unique work of bivocational ministry.

- **Get more involved with the local Baptist Association.**

First, meet and personally get to know the Director of Missions (DOM)/Associational Missionary. He can be one of his best friends. He sees himself as a “pastor to pastors” and can truly help him meet other pastors in the area. Attend the Associational meetings provided for the churches and pastors. Seek the opportunity to become a leader in the Association by serving on committees and accepting responsibilities. This will be helpful to the DOM, to the Association, to his church and to HIM.

- **Find a Prayer Partner**

The bivocational pastor does not need to be convinced of the importance of prayer. It goes without saying that it is essential to

an effective Christian life and ministry. Being alone with God daily in prayer allows one to get to know God more personally. But having a prayer partner is very beneficial as well. Having a trusted partner to pray with allows for accountability, confession, and fellowship. The partner can provide spiritual counsel to help know how to pray.

Who should his Prayer Partner be? Of course, his spouse should be a partner in prayer. Another male figure (avoid a female other than one's wife) who may be a pastor, layman, mentor, a senior, or close friend can add partnership to one's prayer life. Pray for God to lead and to provide the right person that can be trusted in confidence with his most spiritually intimate feelings, thoughts and prayers.

- **Attend the Annual Bivocational Ministers' and Spouses' Retreat**

Each year the Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions provides finances and leadership for a retreat for those in Bivocational Ministry. It is held at the Shocco Springs Baptist Assembly and Conference Center in Talladega, Alabama, during the month of February. It is a two day retreat for bivocational ministers to gather for fellowship and be spiritually refreshed and challenged, away from their churches and normal responsibilities. It is a great opportunity to meet other bivocational ministers and make new friendships with understanding colleagues from across the state. It is also helpful for Bivocational pastors' wives.

- **Take advantage of current technological communications**

Today is a day of easy personal communication through various means of technological devices, such as email, Facebook, Twitter, etc. These can allow him to be in touch with bivocational friends easily and with consistency.

- **Affiliate with Baptist Bivocational Ministers Associations**

At the Bivocational Ministers and Spouses Retreat, ministers are introduced to the state bivocational ministers association, The Alabama Baptist Fellowship of Bivocational Ministers, which sponsors the retreat. The Southern Baptist bivocational association is the Bivocational Small Church Leadership Network. It can be contacted at [www.bivosmallchurch.net](http://www.bivosmallchurch.net). There may be other bivocational ministers' groups that may be of interest.
  
- **Spend time with his “best friend” – His Wife**

Enough said!

## **Joys & Positive Aspects of Bivocational Ministry**

- 1. The financial base for church ministry, as well as the pastor's personal financial base, is usually stronger.**

Churches with bivocational pastors usually find that their financial base is stronger because there is not an expected obligation to pay a "full-time" salary and provide expected benefits. It simply means they can put more of their limited financial resources into the other areas of church ministry.

Likewise, bivocational pastors usually have a secular job that can provide for their family needs, such as housing and insurance. The income from his church provides added financial security.

- 2. The Bivocational Pastor probably will have a better understanding of popular culture.**

Because of his work in the secular world, he is in constant contact with average working men and women. He sees and hears about

their lives, and is surrounded at work each day by today's popular culture. Since he is not exclusively working with or around Christians every day, as most fully-funded pastors usually are, he is not as buffered from the "real" world that average folks live and work in. This may allow him to have a better understanding of the pressures, responsibilities, and joys that average work-a-day people face. This unique understanding can help him to be a better minister to his church family.

### **3. As a Bivocational Pastor working in the public marketplace, he has numerous opportunities to personally witness and minister for Jesus Christ.**

As a bivocational pastor, "the other job" is normally in the public and secular workplace. He deals with the general public which is usually non-Christian, unchurched, or non-attending church. This gives the bivocational pastor many opportunities to minister while at secular work. He can be an "impromptu pastor" and counselor to troubled, delinquent and indifferent Christians. Most certainly he is a witness to the secular world in his dealings and quite often may have the opportunity to personally witness to a lost individual about the saving power of Jesus Christ. He can on a daily basis experience the joy of being a witness to people who may never darken the door of the church.

### **4. The Bivocational Minister often experiences a greater openness and courage to lead.**

Leadership is an inevitable part of being a pastor. It comes with the territory. But he must remember that he is not the only leader in

the church. There are probably those who were leaders in the church long before he arrived. It is also inevitable that the pastor will have to work with them during his ministry.

Because leadership involves responsibility and control (power), the question will be, “Where will the lines be drawn?” In order to work together, there will have to be some give and take; who will share control, who will give up control and who will take on more control.

The pastor is in a position to assume control because (1) he was voted by the church membership to be the church leader, (2) he has a scriptural basis for his leadership, and (3) he has the responsibility to cast a vision or take control of leading the congregation to achieve the church’s God-given vision.

As a bivocational pastor, he can lead with great openness and courage without many of the fears that his “fully-funded” colleagues may face. Since the scripture teaches that even the greatest, God-led leaders can face significant opposition (Moses, Nehemiah, Paul), pastors may face the threat of dismissal. For the fully-funded pastors, this may mean the loss of salary, housing, insurance, and/or family stability. These fears may cause the pastor not to follow God’s leadership and thus surrender to self-appointed church leaders with an agenda driven leadership. In contrast bivocational pastors are not solely dependent on the church for salary and other areas of need, so those fears are greatly diminished. Therefore, he is enabled to take courage and share with openness the vision God has given him. There is joy in such freedom for a godly pastor.

## **5. The Bivocational Minister is more able to delegate ministry.**

Because of the nature of bivocational ministry, the bivocational pastor has another job which makes his on-field church time limited. This limited time schedule is not a surprise to the church membership and, therefore, the limited time he spends on the church field is expected by the members. The church leadership realizes that they must help with the pastoral duties. So it is much easier for him to delegate these duties without the church feeling that he is shirking his responsibilities.

## **6. As a Bivocational Minister, you may not be expected to be Superman.**

Closely aligned with the above statement, another expectation that the bivocational pastor is not usually expected to be: “Superman Pastor.” Many times the “fully-funded” pastor is expected to do it all without much aid from the congregation. After all, isn’t he being paid to do it all! Of course it is unrealistic to expect anyone to do everything in the church ministry. But there are those who want a “Superman Pastor,” and wrongly, there are some pastors who try to be him and suffer “burn-out” and depression. Because of the very nature of bivocational ministry, most churches with a bivocational pastor will not expect him to be “Superman Pastor.”

## **7. Bivocational Ministers are less likely to succumb to the temptation to be lazy with time on their hands.**

Although it is **NOT** common among pastors to be lazy, there can be the temptation to become lazy when there's not enough to do **or** just simply too much to do. For bivocational pastors, there's just not enough opportunity to succumb to the temptation to be lazy. A lazy person cannot do two or more jobs effectively and his maintain employment. Such is true of bivocational pastors. With most, there's not even time to consider the temptation of laziness!

## **8. The Bivocational Minister has greater freedom to follow God's Will.**

The "other job" allows the bivocational pastor greater freedom to follow God's will without the essential concerns of income, housing, insurance and such, that fully-funded pastors must consider when contemplating the acceptance of a call as pastor to a new church. How small and/or limited in resources a church may be, it doesn't cause him to second guess God's leadership to serve in that church. This freedom has allowed more than half of churches to have pastors and be a godly force in their community for Christ.

## **9. The Bivocational Minister's family often has a more flexible social life.**

The bivocational pastor and his family usually does not live on church property, in a church owned house. His home may be elsewhere in the community or not in the community at all. He and his family may have lived in the same house for many years before serving that local church. They have probably made friends in their neighborhood that have no affiliation to that church. Their social range reaches beyond just the church walls. Living in a home that is not church-owned, allows his family to not experience the "living in a gold fish bowl" effect as much. There is a greater sense of freedom, privacy and not living under the spotlight of church opinion and judgment 24/7, 365 days a year.

## In Conclusion . . .

This brief essay about Bivocational Ministry hopefully is an encouragement to those brave, dedicated servants of God who serve tirelessly as bivocational pastors and ministers. They are not alone. In fact their numbers are growing. They are already the majority of pastors and ministers across our state and nation. If there is comfort in numbers, then they are well comforted. Their joys and challenges are very similar wherever they are serving. No, they are **not** “second class” ministers. They are servants of the Almighty God and King of Kings. God doesn’t settle for “second class.” They proudly yet humbly walk in the footsteps of the Apostle Paul. As he reminds us, “Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say, Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4)

Another goal of this brief essay is to remind and/or inform those whose pastor or minister is bivocational that these Servants of God have unique joys and challenges. God called them and God will equip them to serve His church. The best you can do for your pastor/minister is to pray for him. If you do, you will love and support him and his family, even if you don’t always agree.

For churches that may be considering calling a bivocational pastor, but has previously had “fully funded” or “fulltime pastors,” I encourage you in the Lord to be open to this transition. This **does not** mean you are taking a step down. The same God that called and equipped your “fulltime” pastors is the same God that called and equips Bivocational Pastors. Because church situations change, especially financially, “going bivocational” does not have to mean that the church will suffer in the process. If a church suffers it will probably be more the cause of the church members than the pastor. Rejoice that God has confidence in your church’s ministry and that He will give you a pastor. After all, it is His church. God wants to see your church be an effective witness where He has planted you. Just follow the Holy Spirit’s guidance and He will take care of everything else.

**“And again I say, Rejoice!”**

**For More Information**

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