

Competing Commitments Helping People Discover What Sabotages Them

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Pastors and church leaders are very familiar with the concept of commitment. Most often the word is used among ministry leaders in reference to the commitment of church members. Those who are committed are usually loyal and stay with the church through thick and thin. Those who are not committed come and go like the wind.

But there is another side to commitment. To be fair, the concept must be applied in the other direction as well, i.e., how committed is the pastor to the church and to the church members? This intriguing question is not often discussed. Even more to the point, how committed is the ministry leader to his or her call?

The answer to these questions can sometimes be hidden from view. This is especially the case when one considers the concept of competing commitments. What is a competing commitment? To better understand this unfamiliar idea, let's look at the life of a hypothetical church planter...one of the most important roles in Kingdom expansion.

The Planter's Commitments

Let's assume that our church planter has just recently arrived in the target harvest field, and since the church plant is still in the embryonic stage, one of the most vital strategies is to do lots and lots of visiting with people in the community as a way of getting out and about so as to maximize visibility.



Clearly, some people are much better at this than others, and if our church planter is one of those who recognizes the need for this phase, but is very uncomfortable when it comes to meeting new people, the concept of competing commitments becomes a major consideration.

On the one hand, you have the visible commitment to get out every day and meet as many people as possible so as to tell all who will listen of the new work in the community. However, since this is not an activity that really excites this particular church planter, he or she all too easily finds all sorts of other, less vital activities to engage in as a way to avoid going out into the marketplace.

The question then becomes one of identifying the behind-the-scenes commitment that is driving the non-productive behavior. Is it a commitment to safety? Is it a commitment to avoid rejection? Maybe it's a commitment to avoid a fear of some sort, e.g., fear of failure, fear of man, et al. Clearly, there is some competing commitment that is in reality stronger than the visible and

supposedly primary commitment because the competing commitment is winning the battle and determining the planter's behavior.

Here is a place where a coach can be of great service. A well-trained coach can work with an individual to discover and define those competing commitments. Once the culprit is identified, then the coach can help the ministry leader see the sheer absurdity of the commitment to the competition. For example, is it really more important for the church planter to be committed to his or her safety (i.e., save one) than it is to be committed to the success of the church plant and save hundreds or thousands? Obviously, such a thought is ludicrous—indeed absurd. Often, when the true culprit is recognized and the absurdity of the competing commitment is understood, the non-strategic behavior easily disappears.

The [Competing Commitments Tool](#) is directed at those who are having difficulty doing those things necessary to accomplish their goal(s). There may be a competing commitment lurking in the background which can usually be found and identified by working through the four questions found in this tool.

Jerry Graham is a certified coach and coach trainer who helps pastors and ministry leaders become the leaders they were meant to be. Meet Jerry at www.TheCoachingPair.com or www.CoachingPastors.com/Graham.html.