

A Primary Task of Leadership: Urgent vs. Important

By Bob Young

I have heard it for longer than I can remember. “Be careful lest the urgent crowd out the important.” Ministers juggle urgent demands every day, every week. Christians are pulled from one urgent matter to the next. Needs are immediate. The next project is due.

When the urgent controls our lives, the important things suffer – even the most important things. We let important parts of our lives run on autopilot. We put off making decisions. We fail to act and the moment is gone. Unfortunately, there are few built-in guardrails. No one gets upset if we put off important things. No one challenges us or corrects us. Mark it down! “Important things don’t just happen!” They require constant attention and action.

Here are leadership principles to maintain focus on what is most important.

- Make the important task a part of each the job description of each staff member and every member of the group. Always include the most important tasks in evaluations. Accountability begins with this truth: what gets measured gets done.
- Set goals that reflect important things. Review progress. Expect results. Healthy accountability yields results.
- Include most important things in meetings and prayers. Review, commend, and share progress.
- Require regular reports and updates about the most important things.
- Track progress, compile statistics. Keep the most important things constantly in view.