



# Orientation to MTS

## 1. Adjusting To Ministry As Work

### *1) Ministry work is open-ended and tends to be unstructured*

In ministry there is no 'clocking on and off'. When are we at work and when are we not at work? Some events are clearly work, others are not. There are work patterns but also many irregular 'divine interruptions'.

Ministry is like no other job. The closest parallel is running a family business or a farm.

- we work at home
- it involves our whole life including our family
- our friends are our customers
- the pattern is irregular

This can lead to laziness and disorganisation or workaholism and guilt or a combination of all of these. There is no partition in life between work and ministry; hence we live an integrated lifestyle, which is a good thing. On the other hand it is oppressive because we are never free.

Some people find it very difficult while others love it. It is like moving from an urban lifestyle to a small country town, almost a fish-bowl existence.

### *2) Ministry work has less concrete achievements*

This can mean low work satisfaction and motivation. We never know what (if anything) we have achieved. We are not even always sure what we are trying to achieve. There are very few concrete achievements (even leading someone to Christ is God's work, and they may fall away). We may have been more faithful in a situation where someone rejected the gospel.

Perfectionists and highly-structured people find it difficult and tend to worry about: 'How do I use my time? Am I doing the right thing?'

There is no job description for MTS. This is partly because we are deliberately trying to train entrepreneurs. We don't want to limit trainees in what they expect to have to do but to create an environment of trying new ideas to minister the gospel. The downside is this sense of not knowing whether we have done the job.

### *3) In ministry we have a high degree of discretionary time*

All of this means we need to be self-managers and learn to use time to create ministries. For many this is a completely new way of working and takes some time to adjust.

### *4) In ministry we work when others are not*

We do more work in the evenings and weekends than most people. We need to accept this lifestyle and enjoy the compensations. For example, we can take the kids to school and be home when they come home.

### **5) *Working from home***

There are positives – low commuting time, and negatives – a sense of isolation, distractions at home in a non-work environment, etc. We need to make rules for ourselves (eg TV not on while the sun is up) and exercise some discipline. Work out when it is appropriate for the kids to come into the study. It helps to talk through with our spouse patterns of being ‘at work’ and ‘at home’. Then flexibility is needed to avoid resentment.

### **6) *Working in the market place***

Rather than working at home and only going out for specific appointments, we need to spend a lot of time out and about in the community we are trying to reach. This is especially true while doing MTS. Hidden away in our homes means we spend most of our time at the desk rather than with people. So for campus Trainees, spend most of the day at Uni, parked in a cafeteria, alternating between preparation, appointments and unplanned time with people as they come by. For church-based Trainees, maybe try shopping centres or the city, where our church members pass by or at least are accessible.

### **7) *Work and Rest***

We need to learn how to work faithfully and honestly without going on a guilt trip when we need to take time off for normal living. The problem is that we could become very lazy or too busy. Most MTS Trainees are not lazy so rest needs to be stressed generally. Hence:

- Work six days, and rest one.
- You need 36 contiguous hours (ie two nights and a complete dawn-to-dusk day) as your day off. This means not 24 separate hours scattered through the week.
- If we don't have a rest day, we will burn out in a few years because it is affecting us now.
- Part time staff need more flexibility. The stress of work combined with ministry creates more pressure.
- Make sure that you are not seen as a workaholic. Do not be guilty about relaxing and enjoying life and let others know you rest and recreate.
- If possible keep one day a week (besides your day off) without regular commitments, as an alternative day off after weekend house parties etc. Your spouse won't have the same flexibility, so you can't do it regularly.
- There can be conflict between spouses as to how to spend your rest days. If the husband is in ministry and his wife at work, usually the wife wants to socialise, and the husband wants to avoid people. Therefore you need to compromise. Think about who you can see - some people will be ‘work’ and some will not.

### **8) *Holidays***

- Plan 4 weeks
- There are key times in the ministry year to avoid holidays

### **9) *Relating to others about our work patterns***

When talking to congregation members, we need to be careful about the impression we give about how hard we work. We could give the impression that we work too hard or that we are lazy. We need to be careful about talking about how we spend our time because it is hard for others to relate to our work-lifestyle. Much of what we do doesn't sound like work. Also, we should be careful not to be insensitive about how hard other people are working.

### **10) *Diary***

We cannot do any kind of Christian ministry without a diary. Buy one, write in it and read it! We need to be organised, so we need a system that works for us.

### **11) *Ministry as a Christian and work as a staff member***

We need to remember the distinction between our ministry as a Christian and our work as a Christian. Some ministries are just because we are Christian, not because we are employed in ministry. Hence there will always be more ministry to do than we can get to. People will suspect our motives – 'you are only talking to me because you are being paid to' – although sincerity eventually shines through.

### **12) *Rhythm of Life***

You need to get a feel for the rhythm of life on MTS. Parish ministry is quite different from university ministry.

- January is slow and is a time to prepare and plan for the year.
- February to Easter is absolute flat out. It is about starting groups, welcoming newcomers and beginning discipleship relationships. For those beginning MTS it is also the time to get used to the patterns and expectations of paid Christian ministry. Make sure you book in some sort of break at Easter.
- Easter to June is a steady slog of meeting with people and running groups. Now is the time to start planning the big things for next year – new groups, church plants etc.
- June-July. Book in a couple of weeks of holiday. Slower, although this year we have a parish-wide mission.
- August-September is also flat out. Inviting people to Challenge conference is a priority during this time.
- October-November is often when we hit pay dirt with people – they make significant progress after a year of steady, faithful ministry. Finalise next year's trainees.
- December is busy and it is often hard to get things done, but there are plenty of opportunities for evangelism in the community.

## 2. Privacy and Confidentiality.

- We are in the people business and we gather loads of information.
- The underlying principle is: will it be edifying to tell this?
- Beware of gossip. Do not speak if there is no benefit to the person concerned.
- If a colleague tells us about another person, do not tell other staff and don't treat the information as public knowledge.
- We may raise issues confidentiality with the team to discuss what is best for specific people. This can also further our training.
- What is said in the staff meeting is not to go elsewhere. Be loyal to one another.
- Never let people bind you to total confidentiality. We need to be able to tell our spouse or leaders if appropriate. Sometimes we need to share things we know with others (spouse, staff) as a safety valve.
- If you are given information that has legal overtones, encourage the person to make restitution and set the situation right. Talk to your Trainer and see if a solicitor should be consulted. Suggest: "I won't tell anyone without telling you first." Also, you have a legal responsibility to report crimes. This should be done through your trainer – don't jump in and do it yourself. The best way to do it may in fact be to work the person around to confessing to the police themselves.
- When asked a question, we are not compelled to answer – just do not lie.
- When we talk about people, the way we do it is very important – never a put-down, but in love with concern for godliness.
- It can be helpful for new staff to start from square one in relationships with people and not be told all the details about specific people. It is often better to work out our own understanding of the person.
- There may be things that certain people need to know – you need to use wisdom to work out what to tell who and when; i.e. what should be passed on and what should be forgotten.
- Response cards. Never throw them out! We are fanatically interested in the person the card represents. If you never throw out a card, you will never throw out the wrong one! You never know where a contact will lead.
- Any information given on cards is only given to eldership and staff. Even within church membership, don't give information out freely. NEVER give out a woman's details. Refer enquires to the Office, and they will contact on the enquirer's behalf. No woman's phone number should ever appear on any advertising.
- Any information given to you it is assumed that you are able to tell your supervisor. This doesn't mean you have to tell them, but don't share it with everyone else (information only up and down, not across). Share information only for the benefit of the person you're caring for – if you don't know what to do etc.

### 3. Money

- Christ's Name is disgraced and ministries are ruined through greed and embezzlement.
- There must be absolute integrity in all money matters.
- There must be the appearance of absolute integrity in all money matters.
- Ministers should not physically handle the congregation's money and so not to appear to have a hand in the till.
- At Conferences and Bookstalls you do have to handle money, but here you are dealing with business transactions rather than donations. Keep good money records and issue receipts so that all listed. Never borrow from the bookstall.
- Be aware of our greed. 1 Peter 5:2
- Be determined to be content with your own wages.
- In Ministry, we are not at liberty to receive money from other sources but to depend on our own congregation of welfare. Any money we receive should go to the church. In particular, we must not accept any money from congregation members so that we will not be indebted to anyone and not tempted to do anything for money. Make up your mind to do it now.  
Exceptions: money from family, small kind tokens of love, out of pocket expenses.
- If we keep these gifts, we cultivate greed and learn that ministry can be used for monetary gain. We do not need these gifts since we are provided for through our church, MTS, working etc. We can be generous by insisting the gift is passed on to others, especially the organisations that fund us.
- Greed and embezzlement ruin ministries all the time. A requirement of elders is that they must not be greedy for money (1 Tim 3, Titus 1, 1 Peter 5). Ministers will get paid but that should not be their motive in ministering.
- If a ministry is being run as a business it will do what attracts the crowd so more people will give more money. This will not be gospel ministry.
- What do you do if you are building your own platform? Find a treasurer and don't handle the money yourself.

### 4. Gender Issues

Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity (1 Tim 5:1-2)

Some thoughts about working *with* colleagues of the opposite sex:

- In one sense there is no difference as ministers of the gospel.
- Our physical and emotional capacity is different. Women's capacity for relationship is greater than most males, but this takes its toll. Women are more compassionate, more generous, understand others better, and are more sensitive.
- Men tend to be task-centred with female co-workers rather than relational.

- For women, the future is less certain in some ways and this leads to anxiety.
- Men should do the physical work.
- Men tend to make unilateral decisions rather than through discussion with women.
- Men should be shepherds and protectors of women.
- Be aware that working in ministry together can breed emotional and sexual intimacy.

Some thoughts about ministry *to* the opposite sex:

- Christ's Name is disgraced and ministries are ruined through sexual unfaithfulness.
- There must be no appearance of evil as well as no evil.
- As far as possible minister to your gender.
- Meet publicly, rather than privately, both for your reputation and as protection from intimacy. Don't set up regular appointments with someone of the opposite sex. That is, no regular 1-1 discipleship meetings with people of the opposite sex.
- It is easy to talk about life and seek support from someone other than your spouse. This leads to great danger.
- If you feel there is any threat upon your relationship with your spouse, take immediate action!!
- Be accountable to your Trainer in this.

## 5. Dress.

- Clothing is a statement about yourself, so you need to be thoughtful about what you are trying to say.
- Some people are more sensitive than others.
- People do notice what you're wearing.
- We must dress to avoid distraction or offence.
- What helps you to preach the gospel is what matters, not what you like.
- Dress appropriately for the context – part of the context will be age.

Modesty:

- This is a problem that men have that women have to pay the price for.
- It is possible for men to dress immodestly as well – be thoughtful.
- A man's sexual responsiveness comes from vision, whilst a woman's sexual responsiveness comes from relationship and touch.

- What men see is what arouses them sexually. It has nothing to do with the relationship, which is why pornography works – part of it's attraction is depersonalisation.
- For men who believe in sexual purity, the way a woman dresses could be a problem for them. Women need to care for brothers by being modest in their dress. Women need to walk the line between being attractive and modest.
- Be a step behind the fashion because fashion is about sex. Women dress for other women in competition for men. Fashion is designed to attract men.
- Sometimes a person may need to be spoken to because they are unaware of what it is they are doing that is creating a problem.
- Preach on this rarely but set the norms in the church by speaking to staff and the wives of staff.
- Women have problems with touch, so a man needs to beware of comforting her physically.

## 6. Extra-curricular ministries

ie. Speaking at camps, youth groups etc. Some considerations:

- Which ones will further your training goals?
- Fulfil your local responsibilities
- Watch the ego

## 7. Final thoughts

- You are simply being paid to be a godly Christian. Don't try to divide your life up artificially.
- Ministry is about lowly service. Always be prepared to do the unglamorous tasks.
- If you don't fail on MTS then you have failed MTS