

Feature Sheet-Moody Radio Commentary

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Feature Title: Dr. John Koessler–It’s hard being a Pastor – Part 2 of 2

Bio: Dr. John Koessler is Professor and Chair of the Pastoral Department of Moody Bible Institute.

More Info: Transcript and link to listen to this commentary are found at our website at www.mornings.fm www.warpandwoof.org

Pastoral work is cyclical work. It is work which is marked by rhythm and repetition. There is the weekly cycle of sermon preparation. It doesn't matter how well the sermon went on Sunday. When Monday comes, the process must begin again. The better the message, the greater the pressure we feel to repeat the experience. As much as we love sermon preparation, even the best of us must sometimes feel as if we are on a treadmill. Sunday night leaves many a pastor dreading the approach of a new work week just like the factory worker or office employee.

Our ministry of leadership is also cyclical, subject to the ebb and flow of life within the church. Every congregation has its own seasons. In some churches summer is the time when things slow down. Attendance dips and committees or programs go on hiatus as members leave for vacation. In other churches summer is the busy season. This rhythm of congregational life can frustrate a pastor whose planning cycle and expectations are out of sync with the rhythm of the church. Ignorance of this aspect of the church's culture is a recipe for misunderstanding and mutual frustration.

On the surface you might wonder how pastoral counseling could ever feel routine. The church is filled with a variety of people whose background and circumstances differ from one another. Yet after a few years we discover that even when the faces and the names change, the problems are the same. We must confront the same sins. We are asked the same questions. Our preaching, too, begins to feel monotonous as the a few fundamental

themes resurface in passage after passage. Or as the same holidays demand our attention year after year. It doesn't take long before we begin to feel that we have only a handful of sermons and that we preach them over and over again.

A first step to addressing this challenge may be to recognize that the congregation is more a field than it is a factory. The pastor has more in common with the farmer than he does with the factory worker or the CEO. And one of the primary characteristics of work in the field is the importance of rhythm. Agricultural work is seasonal work. Every season has its own activity. It is a vocation that cannot be rushed, one where waiting is as essential as working. No wonder James 5:7-8 urges: Be patient, then, brothers, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop and how patient he is for the autumn and spring rains. You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near."

There is value in the rhythm and repetition that is so much a part of the life of the church. Repetition is a necessary to growth and learning. Indeed, rhythm and repetition are evident in nearly every aspect of created life. We live in a world marked by the returning rhythms of planning and execution, work and rest, seed-time and harvest. In human learning there is a need to hear the same things over and over again. This is not a mark of stagnation or stupidity. It is only our frenetic leadership culture, afflicted as it is with the spiritual equivalent to attention deficit disorder, that sees these things as a detriment.

That's my opinion. For Moody Radio, this is John Koessler.