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A Pastor's First 100 Days

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**Harry K. Zeiders**

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President Barack Obama and President Donald Trump have at least this in common: detailed plans for the first 100 days in office. Obama worked to drill down his agenda eight years ago, and Trump has outlined his checklist for after inauguration day. Pressure and expectations come from everywhere — voters, pundits, lobbyists, Congress — to accomplish as many goals during the first three months as possible.

Pastors starting new positions in the new year and candidates facing interviews may have sensed a similar pressure from congregations and search committees. “What will you accomplish in your first 100 days?” I’ve actually been asked this question.

But pastorates are not like presidencies. Even executive pastors whose job descriptions are more task-oriented do not have a job like elected government officials or C-level corporate leaders.

A better model may be found in the world of sports. “It took 16 years,” for legendary UCLA basketball coach John Wooden, “to create the kind of team he had envisioned,” observes Don Yaeger in the December issue of *Success* magazine. In England’s Premier League soccer season, Manchester City is currently in 4th place under their new manager, Pep Guardiola. One of his competitors, a manager of a higher ranked club, said in an interview, “If you are not humble enough . . . you will be disappointed. Guardiola is one of the best coaches in the world and it is normal that he needs time to put his ideas into practice.”

Yet, in the world of cross-cultural missions, Christian anthropologists tell us that the first days in a new culture and in a new ministry are indeed critical. We do need to do something more than just unpack our boxes and find out where the best coffeeshop is. Here are some recommendations for capitalizing on your first 100 days:

1. Get on your knees



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him, talking to him, and endeavoring to listen to him every day of our first 100 days of ministry, then we should do everyone a favor and quit before we get settled into a rhythm of ministering without God and before we start thinking we can possibly serve him and his people outside of communing with him. Paul exhorted his armored soldiers to go into battle by staying in close communication with headquarters: “praying at all times in the Spirit” (Ephesians 6:18). Your ministry for your next 1,000 days and 10,000 days will only be as good as the quality of connection you have with God in the beginning. Get on your knees for the first 100 days and stay there.

2. Take your sandals off

Like Moses, we need to recognize that we are standing on holy ground. If you are pioneering a new work, the Triune God has gone before you to prepare the fields for you – it is holy ground. If you are going into a ministry proud of a heritage which reaches back over a century – you are standing on holy ground consecrated by generations of faithful brothers and sisters. If you are going into a dead and dying place, you are still standing on holy ground – a place that God still lays claim to and longs to see infused with fresh vitality. Kick your sandals off and keep them off.

3. Reload your card

Five days a week for your first 100 days take someone out for coffee. Or, arrange to visit a member at their workplace so that you can appreciate what they do to earn a living and tithe to the church. Ask your youth minister to take you to a local school to have lunch with students. Make a surprise visit to a homegroup some evening. Invite your staff to a boardgame night or movie night in your home. The point is to form relationships at the start of your ministry – which of course is more of a challenge for pastors who are introverts, but so vitally important. We need to Form before an inevitable Storm arrives so that we can Norm as a team and then Perform. I’ve learned the hard way that trying to short-circuit the organic cycle by jumping straight into Performing may accomplish a few short-term wins but in the long term it’s inefficient for our human relationships in ministry. I think if Jesus were a pastor today, he would keep his coffeeshop card fully loaded. (By the way, using cash or even a debit card in front of a guest can make them feel obligated to return the favor, and that’s not what we’re going for.)



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at a new church, we don't love them. Now there may be lots of excitement and lots of smiles and lots of hopes for the future . . . but even if we've gone through five rounds of interviews, we don't really know the people, so how could we possibly love them? Godly love – the kind of love that God has for the world – is loving people even though he knows everything about them. And Godly love is self-sacrificial love. Even if you've given up everything to relocate to the place God has called you to, Godly love requires that you give up everything again in order to really – really – love God's bride . . . and not for what you might get out of the relationship. Godly love takes time. So, you better get started.

No matter what title you carry in your church and no matter what kind of church you serve, eschew the pressure groups and special interests – and above all, the enemy of your soul – who tempt you to a meteoric rise to glory by great feats as you begin a new ministry. And, if you're a senior leader, don't be a part of the pressure on your new hire. Treasure the first 100 days. Make them special. Get on your knees. Kick your sandals off. Reload your card. And learn to love.

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Bishop Ken is Mission Director at SAMS

Really enjoyed this article Harry. Well written and some excellent advice. The Lord bless you in the next 100 days and beyond! [Ken Clarke](#)

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Well written Harry, glad that God has found a place for you. All things work together for Gods good. David Kerr Magheralin.

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