

What Hat Should I Wear Today?

by Dale Frimodt

No, I'm not about to address a fashion topic and share my thoughts on Easter bonnets! For many of us, our days may start with the question running through our heads, not what we should wear, but rather what we should be about for the day. For many of the ministers with whom I've worked, this is especially true.

First, there's the hat he thinks his congregation might want him to wear. Secondly, the hat he was told to wear during seminary. There's the mentor that he looks up to who wears yet a different kind of hat. And then there's the hat worn by that young and apparently successful minister that sponsored the recent conference he attended. The hats look good on those wearing them, but which best fits him? To whose voice should he pay attention as he decides which hat to wear today?

The hats that I am talking about are the many different ways that a minister can define how he goes about doing his job. If you are a minister, you already know what I am talking about. Too many may assume that there is just one job description for all ministers. Yet if a minister listens to his congregation, he will find in talking to ten different families that each may have different assumptions as to what his primary job should be. The list may include teacher, shepherd-comforter, visionary, CEO, counselor, or administrator. Some only want him to be good at one or two of these, but there are always a few that want him to be able to do all of the above and excellently at that! Which voice should he listen to?

Other voices may be less direct, but they are nonetheless powerful because they are voices of his peers in ministry. If they appear successful, it can become somewhat easy to want to be just like them. So perhaps these are the voices he should listen to, but which one?

The many voices can add up to a not-so-subtle pressure. After many years of hearing similar stories from ministers, I have concluded that ***most who try to wear too many hats usually end up feeling like they aren't being successful in wearing even one of the hats.*** Discouragement, anger, or a desire to move to a new assignment may soon follow.

What is the solution? I am not about to suggest the right hat for you. But the things I do know and try to help ministers find, is that for each of us,

- God is not confused about what He has called and equipped us to do.
- He can be trusted to have gifted us to do the task He has assigned us.
- We will almost always need to do things outside our strengths, but God has a design and purpose in how He has gifted us.
- The voice to listen to is God's and we are most free in ministry when we are confident in who He has made us, Who we are serving and what He has for us to do.

Wear the hat He gives you with a measure of comfort and certainty! In the end it will always be most important not which hat we are wearing but to which voice we are listening.

In 2001, Barna Research stated, "Our studies show that churchgoers expect their pastor to juggle an average of 16 major tasks. That's a recipe for failure—nobody can handle the wide range of responsibilities that people expect pastors to master... The pastor who strives to meet everyone's demands and strives to keep everyone happy is guaranteed to fail."