

4 Things Bivocational Pastors Need from Seminaries - Part 2

Bivocational ministry is emerging as a necessity for many churches and denominations.

Yet, most theological institutions still focus on preparation for full-time congregational ministry and tend to ignore any other ministry model.

Sharon Miller, director of research at the Center for the Study of Theological Education at Auburn Seminary, was [questioned](#) about the role that seminaries play in preparing students to assume bivocational or biprofessional ministry roles.

“The bivocational [model] by necessity is rarely, or never, talked about even as more and more graduates find themselves in this situation,” she says. “This is the arena where I think schools and students really need educating.”

What are some ways that seminaries can address this opportunity?

1. Seminaries should acknowledge biprofessional ministry as a valid calling.

Ministry has been done in many ways over the history of the church, including tentmaker, worker priest, farmer pastor and circuit rider models. The common denominator in all is the vocation of ministry.

A practical way to address this in a seminary setting is to spotlight bivocational ministers in seminary programming, rather than always calling upon full-time clergy as chapel speakers and class guests.

2. All students, not just those who will be bivocational, need to develop time-management skills.

Good use of time is especially important for those whose time is divided between ministry and another area of work, however.

Classes could address things like efficient use of time in Bible study and sermon preparation.

Familiarization with digital study tools, accessing online library resources and

effective use of social media for communication are necessities.

3. Students need to learn effective people development skills, such as identifying and equipping lay leaders, how to lead meetings and how to encourage and show appreciation to lay leaders.

Good pastors, full-time and part-time, need to be mentors, coaches and facilitators.

4. Students who know they are going to be biprofessional need employment coaching.

This includes writing a resume that clearly communicates their skills, networking with potential employers and others in their field of interest and interviewing preparation.

[Packard Brown](#) also provides another possibility for employment, the “gig economy.”

He writes, “The ‘gig economy - contractual or freelance jobs in which workers set their own hours and fees - also offers possibilities for secondary income streams. Hundreds of sites exist online where bivocational pastors can post their skills for hire (like tutoring or writing reports) or apply for short-term work assignments.”

As the need grows, some seminaries, such as [Central Baptist Theological Seminary](#) in Shawnee, Kansas, are adapting to the reality of biprofessionalism in ministry in creative ways.

Editor's note: This is the second of a two-part series. Part one is available [here](#). A [version](#) of this article first appeared on Harrison's [blog](#), Barnabas File. It is used with permission.