

A SUNDAY JOB

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English
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[Assignment: Respond to the essays we've read and the issues we've discussed by writing a short essay (3-4 pages) about sports, work, and/or about how boys are socialized to be masculine. You may use your own experience in order to support or oppose the viewpoints you choose, or analyze the ideas of writers without referring to your own experience.]

The shrill ringing of the telephone reverberates through the quiet house at 2:37 in the morning. But by now, after living like this for over fifteen years, I barely even open an eyelid. Just as I am drifting back to sleep, I hear the garage door go up and the faint sound of my dad's car starting up. The occupation that my dad is in has accustomed my family to these early morning calls. No, he is not a doctor or a lawyer. My dad is a pastor.

Most people do not understand that being a pastor involves a great deal more than producing a fifteen minute speech once a week and shaking hands at the door on Sundays. Being a pastor is not a career, it is a life. Often his day starts out before eight and does not end until after ten and very rarely does he ever have a whole day off. But Dad juggles his schedule to be there for the three of his children when we have games, recitals, or performances. Truly, it is a miracle with his schedule from hell that my dad can be at so many of our activities.

If the phone does not ring in the early hours of the morning requesting his presence at a hospital somewhere or at the church because of a break-in, my dad leaves the house at 7:30 a.m. After leading an early morning Bible study, he then has appointments. He has appointments with the head of the Worship Committee, the head of the Sunday School Committee, and the head of the Finance Committee who is complaining about the head of the Worship Committee and the head of the Sunday School Committee. The word "appointment" in this context is slightly misleading. It implies a certain amount of organization which is not usually present. This is due to the fact that most of his appointments show up fifteen minutes late and leave an hour after they were supposed to. The fun really starts in the afternoon when he receives an emergency phone call from one of the couples to whom he is giving pre-marital counseling. They are threatening to call the whole thing off two days before the wedding.

By five o'clock, Dad has kept the head of the Finance Committee from bringing charges against the Sunday School Program Coordinator for misappropriation of funds, convinced the nervous couple that not agreeing on the color of the throw pillows for their new living room doesn't mean they were "incompatible," visited the sick, picked up my sister from the baby-sitter and started world peace. He sprints through all of this to be able to eat a quick dinner at home at 5:30 and be back at the church for meetings that start at 6:00 and do not adjourn until after 10:30 because

the sewing circles get into an argument again about whose turn it is to make coffee on Sunday.

The description of my dad's day, of course, is intended to be exaggerated slightly. I do mean only slightly because there are days that are very similar to the one described above (except for the world peace thing). One of these days happened to fall on June 4, 1993. On that day, my dad had his normal circus of a daily schedule and in addition, a wedding rehearsal that had had to be rescheduled for that evening. June 4 was not only my mother's 43rd birthday, it was also the night of my graduation from high school, which happened to coincide with almost the exact time of the wedding rehearsal. On top of all the other differences between being a pastor and having a normal job, the one that played the largest part in this scenario is that a pastor cannot call someone else in to work for him, particularly when the wedding couple chooses him specifically for the wedding ceremony. So, I had accepted the fact that he was not going to be able to be at my graduation. Similar incidents had occurred in the past and I should have been used to it, but I was not. My feelings were more than a little hurt that he was going to miss one of the most important nights of my life because of his job. After the ceremony was over, I went to find my mom and all my other relatives and my dad was standing there. He had rescheduled the wedding rehearsal for an hour earlier so that he could race home and be there for my graduation.

My dad does the best he can to be there for his family. He will rearrange his entire week of appointments to see my sister in her pre-school Christmas program. He leaves council meetings early to see the last half of my brother's basketball game. And just this year, he has taken the day off at least twice so that he can take me back to school himself. He does not do it out of obligation; he knows we understand he cannot be there sometimes. He is there for us because he chooses to be. It did not matter to him that he would have to stay at the church an extra three hours that night; it was worth it to him to hear Susan sing one very off-key version of "Away in the Manger" in the afternoon.