

5-a-day Ministry

A short exploration

In the context of food and healthy eating you are almost certainly familiar with 5-a-day. If you have children you probably swing between feeling good about achieving it and guilty about falling short of the mark. However, in the context of ministry?

There are some things that if I don't do my ministry begins to struggle. If I don't pray I can probably cope for a day, maybe two, but at the end of a week without prayer I find myself almost unbearable, a feeling I am sure is shared by those around me. If I think about this, there are in fact quite a few things in ministry that if I don't do I begin to struggle and those around me begin to suffer. These are the things that keep my ministry healthy, which in turn means I am more bearable to live with.

Using the healthy eating model, I can name 5 things. If I do them daily I find that ministry is really healthy in both the short and long term. There are whole range of things I can do, just as there are a whole range of fruit and vegetables; but which ones are relevant for my current context and setting? Here are my *current* 5-a-day.

Prayer: not just an office, but getting to a place where I have a chance of hearing from God. In short some listening time.

Scripture: again, not just an office but a chance to engage with the story to which I belong.

Visit: A day without seeing someone in and around the parish[es] always feels like there is something missing.

Friend: It would be easy to get lost in my own world, having time with my family, as friends, and not just the functional tea-time and bath-time, is thoroughly life-giving. Likewise, losing touch with the wider circle of people, the friends, who love me and whom I love means life is all the poorer.

Physical: There is a lot of sitting; with people over a cup of tea, in the car, behind a screen; it is not long before the blood supply turns apathetic. Walking the dog, digging the garden, playing with the kids outside and many other activities all count and help to keep me feeling alive let alone physically keeping my heart and body in better shape.

There are many schemes and tips for getting things done, staying efficient and moving visions forward. This 5-a-Day Ministry is not meant to be a replacement for any of these, just one that focuses on the self-leadership of the ministry aspect of vocation and, in this case, ordained life.