

9 Markers that Ministry May be Your Idol

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May I be honest with you? I started full-time ministry at 20 years old, and I quickly grew enamored with the excitement and the perceived prestige of ministry. I would never have admitted it then, but I made ministry my idol – and I confess that I still run that risk this many years later. Here are some signs that suggest ministry may have become an idol for you:

1. **You tie much of your self-worth to your ministry success.** Even if you know better than to think that way, your heart still moves in that direction if your ministry has become an idol.
2. **Your spouse and family, even if they don't admit it, feel like your ministry is more important to you than they are.** This is the danger, too—many great families are reticent to be honest, lest they harm what matters so much to you.
3. **You tend to talk more about your ministry than about your Lord.** The conversations you do have about the Lord are more perfunctory than personal, more job-related than Jesus-focused.
4. **You continually think about the next step on the ladder of ministry success.** Idols work that way, actually – they never fully satisfy, and they leave you longing for more.
5. **You refer to the congregation you lead as “my church.”** That's not an automatic marker, but it often accompanies other markers in this list.

6. **You spend more time thinking about the temporary rewards of ministry than about the crowns you'll lay back at the feet of Jesus in eternity.** Again, that's the way idols work: they turn our focus toward the temporal and challenge us to treat the fleeting as if it were eternal.
7. **You regularly compare yourself to other ministry leaders – and strive to do better and grow something bigger than they do.** When we long for worldly recognition, our work becomes part of our idolatries.
8. **You tend to point out others you believe are guilty of ministry idolatry.** Sometimes it's easier to see in others what we refuse to see in ourselves.
9. **You remind others about your ministry successes.** This one, of course, goes full circle to #1 above.

What would you add to this list? Where do you see yourself most vulnerable?