

# LIFT

## Ministry Group August Resource

### Decision Fatigue

Decision fatigue describes how the quality of our decision-making declines as we make additional choices; or as our cognitive abilities get worn out. Decision fatigue can occur when we either have too many choices to make or too many options to choose from, a phenomenon known as choice overload. This, in turn, can make us feel overwhelmed and experience a decline in our ability to actually make a choice.<sup>(1)</sup>

The Optimized Pastor shares several practical ways to combat choice overload and recapture your mental energy.

#### 1. Simplify Repetitive Choices

- Create a go-to Sunday outfit.
- Eat the same breakfast daily
- Schedule recurring meetings

#### Routine = No Decision Needed

#### 2. Pre-Decide Your Week

No more waking up and wondering, What should I work on today? Answer that question once and put it on repeat. Assign tasks to each day and stick to your rhythm.

(1) Danziger, S., Levav, J., & Avnaim-Pesso, L. (2011). Extraneous factors in judicial decisions. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 108(17), 6889-6892.



### Make a Decision!

**“You cannot make progress without making decisions.”**

**- Jim Rohn-**

35,000! According to Psychology Today that is the average number of decisions that a person makes each day. As pastors and ministry leaders, the decisions we make have both personal and eternal implications. In addition to the sheer number of decisions we must navigate, is the weightiness of those decisions as they impact the church, community, and people’s eternal destinations.

**Discuss:** Do you often feel overwhelmed by the number of decisions that you have to make each day?

According to the Malphurs Group: “The process of making these decisions is often hindered by various obstacles that can impede our ability to choose wisely and act decisively. Many pastors and ministry leaders find themselves grappling with uncertainty or hesitation when faced with important decisions. This struggle is not only common but also understandable, given the weighty responsibility of shepherding a congregation and stewarding its resources.”

(1) Jennifer Guttman, “Decision-Making: Facing the Challenge of Making 35,000 Decision a Day,” *Psychology Today*, July 16, 2019, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/sustainable-life-satisfaction/201907/decision-making-facing-the-challenge-making-35000-day>.

(2) Scott Ball, “Five Barriers to Effective Decision-Making in the Church,” Malphurs Group, The Church Revitalization Podcast – Episode 248, accessed July 28, 2025, <https://malphursgroup.com/five-barriers-to-effective-decision-making-in-church/>.

### 3. Automate the Small Stuff

Stop wasting brainpower on repeatable tasks. Here are some practical ways to conserve brain power:

- Use recurring calendar blocks
- Set up your bills on autopay
- Meal plan with a rotating menu
- Order groceries online
- Use an email template

### 4. Delegate Like a Pro

Expand the circle of people who are authorized to make leadership decisions. Jethro told Moses to stop doing everything himself (Exodus 18), and yet here we are, still ignoring solid advice. Ask yourself:

Do I need to be making this decision?

Can someone else handle this?

Will the world end if I don't personally approve the new coffee brand for the foyer?

### 5. Set Hard Boundaries

Decision fatigue happens when you say "yes" to everything. Here's a better approach:

If it's not essential, say no. Your time is your most valuable resource.

Limit social media. You don't need to engage in every theological debate online.

Stop checking email all day. Twice a day is plenty.

<https://optimizedpastor.com/decision-fatigue-is-draining-your-ministry-heres-how-to-fix-it/>

Scott Ball of the Church Revitalization Podcast offers five barriers that frequently impede effective decision-making in ministry contexts:

**1. Barrier 1: Blind Spots**-Blind spots in decision-making occur when we don't know what we don't know. It's a common issue in churches where leaders might think they've "tried everything," when in reality, they've only tried everything they know about. This limitation in perspective can significantly hinder effective decision-making.

**2. Barrier 2: Sunk Cost Fallacy**-The sunk cost fallacy is a significant barrier to effective decision-making in churches. This occurs when we continue with a course of action because we've already invested time, money, or emotional energy into it, even when it's clear that it's not working out as planned. In a church context, this often manifests as an unwillingness to stop or change a ministry or program that isn't effective.

**Discuss:** Have you ever nursed a ministry along that you know needed to stop but couldn't bring yourself to pull the plug?

**3. Barrier 3: Time Constraints**-Time constraints can be a significant barrier to effective decision-making in churches. When leaders are pressed for time, they often default to programmed choices – the familiar, safe options – even if these aren't the best solutions for the current situation. This tendency can lead to missed opportunities for growth and innovation in your church.

**4. Barrier 4: Risk Tolerance Levels**-Your level of risk tolerance can significantly impact decision-making in your church. Some leaders are naturally inclined to take risks and try new things, while others are more cautious and prefer sticking with the familiar. Neither extreme is inherently better; the key is finding a balance.

**Discuss:** What is your level of risk tolerance? Are you inclined to take risks or more likely to stick with the familiar?

**5. Conflict Avoidance**-Conflict avoidance is a significant barrier to effective decision-making in churches. Many leaders hesitate to make necessary changes or decisions due to fear of relational damage or potential disagreements within the congregation.

**Discuss:** How often do you fail to make important decisions because of fear of how your decisions will affect the relational equity you have with a person or group?

