

STUDY TWO: DEVELOPING LIFE BALANCE

© Rosemary Bardsley 2009, 2014

A. IS MAINTAINING BALANCE A PART OF CHRISTIAN SPIRITUALITY?

What makes up your life?

Complete Study Two Worksheet Section #1 now.

An important question : is the quest for balance biblical ?

Jesus said things like:

'Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me ... anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.' [Matthew 10:37ff]

What did he mean? Did he mean ...

That we should neglect our family responsibilities because we are involved in the work of Christ's kingdom?

That we should embrace a life of physical hardship or financial poverty because we are too busy in church activities to earn our living and support our families?

That we should do the work of the kingdom flat out and never take a break?

That he was giving us a license for laziness or an excuse for economic incompetence or a reason for relationship disasters?

The need to live a 'balanced life' is often impressed upon us by human wisdom. But is there anything in God's wisdom that would affirm or define the relevance of this for those who belong to Jesus Christ and wish to be involved in the work of his kingdom?

Complete Study Two Worksheet section #2 now. [Note that this involves extensive research of the Bible, and will take quite a long time.]

From these biblical texts it would seem that to live a balanced life should be one of our goals; it will help us to perform and to achieve to our maximum potential. But it is also clear that the quest for balance should not be the Christian's overriding commitment. Our commitment is first and foremost a commitment to the Lord and his kingdom. Balance is a tool that we can use to help us in this commitment.

B. MANAGING YOURSELF

A big factor in achieving a balanced life in which we maximize our God-given potential and our ability to glorify and serve him is about managing ourselves. It is not primarily about managing time.

What does managing oneself look like? It is very much to do with how we think: with what goes on in our mind.

This is why God tells us things like:

'Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of *your mind*' [Romans 12:2].

'So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the *futility of their thinking*' [Ephesians 4:17].

'Your *attitude* should be the same as that of Christ Jesus ...' [Philippians 2:5].

Managing yourself requires you to:

View your life in terms of the *Biblical Priorities* discussed in the *Setting Biblical Foundations* studies.

View your life in terms of the *Biblical Principles* discussed in the *Setting Biblical Foundations* studies.

View yourself as God views you – always, ever and only in Christ. [Review the first three studies in *Knowing Yourself* - <http://www.godswordforyou.com/living-for-jesus/knowning-yourself.html> (/living-for-jesus/knowning-yourself.html)].

[All of the above challenge you to stop looking at your life and yourself in terms of human values and opinions. They will help to protect you against the negative self-perceptions and godless expectations that come from the world and fill our minds with wrong thinking.]

View God as he really is: the God who is in sovereign control of all things, and the God who loves you so much that he gave his only Son to save you.

View your salvation as the Bible presents it: secure and certain because it depends on Jesus Christ alone, and not on your own abilities, success or worthiness.

[These two will give you great confidence in your relationship with God.]

With all of these in mind managing yourself well will mean:

That you approach each day and each task utterly confident in God's love.

That you approach each task, no matter how small, as a task done for God and his glory.

That you will use each moment as a gift from God.

That you will treat each person as a person created by God and precious to God.

That you will give your failures and sins no power to erode or diminish your confidence in God and your peace with God.

C. TAKING CONTROL OF YOUR TIME

'Life is short. We make it shorter by wasting time.'

Stephen Covey in *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* recommends 'putting first things first'. He bases time management on the **concept of four 'quadrants'** into which all of the demands on our time can be classified.

Quadrant I: things that are **urgent** and **important** –

These include things like crises, meeting deadlines, pressing problems. [These have to be done.]

Quadrant II: things that are **important** but **not urgent** –

Things like building relationships, planning [These are often wrongly displaced/delayed by the urgent.]

Quadrant III: things that are **urgent** but **not important** –

These include interruptions, some mail, phone calls and visitors, writing some reports, some meetings.

Quadrant IV: things that are **not urgent** and **not important** –

Things like junk mail and emails, some mail and phone calls, some entertainment, time wasters.

The **important** things contribute to our mission and goals. These should receive most of our attention and time. Things that are urgent, but not important, should be dealt with promptly and graciously. Things that are neither urgent nor important need to be weeded out of our lives as much as possible.

Complete Section #3 What is Important? in the Study Two Worksheet now.

Getting the things in Quadrant IV out of your life, or refusing to spend time on them, will give you more time for the important things. To do this, and to minimize the time you spend on Quadrant III, you will need to set firm boundaries. These boundaries might include:

Putting specific filters on you email accounts.

Deleting, without opening, obvious time-wasting emails.

Putting a 'No junk mail' on your letter box.

Listing your phone number with the Do Not Call registry.

Switching your phone to the answering service during time committed to family etc.

Putting specific filters on your computer to lock you out of sites where you waste time.

Go to the shops only when you need to purchase specific items.

Dealing with emails, letters, etc promptly. [Handling each only once.]

Complete Section #4A-C Life Balance Study in the Study Two Worksheet now.

Complete Section #5 Time Management Study in the Study two Worksheet now.

C.1 Where is your time going?

Your Life Balance Study and Time Management Study have probably revealed that a sizeable chunk of your time is used up with things that do not really contribute to your goals, mission statement or priorities and principles.

Commonly, the biggest underlying causes of wasted time are:

- Our own indecision.
- Our own lack of direction, motivation or commitment.
- Our own laziness.

Knowing who we are, having goals, and being committed to a purpose and a Person bigger than ourselves helps us to become more decisive, more directed, more motivated and more committed – more intentional in our use of time. [Laziness is simply a sin we have to repent of.]

Even so, temptations entice us to use up our time on unessentials. Here the main contemporary culprits are often technology related:

- Computers, including 'computer games'.
- The internet, including gaming, Facebook and other social forums.
- Phones, including texting.
- Television.

C.2 Timetables and schedules can help

Some people find that either detailed timetables or general weekly schedules are an effective tool in time management. What kind of timetable or schedule is best for you depends largely on the kind of person you are and the kind of activities that occupy most of your time.

Detailed timetables:

A detailed timetable will allocate every hour of every day to specific activities. It will include the time you get up in the morning, the time you go to bed, and all things in between, for each day of the week. It will include:

- Sleep
- Prayer and Bible study
- Time spent with family
- Church and ministry
- Time spent with friends
- Employment
- Self-care – hygiene, exercise
- Self-development – education, skill-development
- Care of your home and yard
- Relaxation
- Margin – empty spaces scheduled in to minimize time stress.

This detailed time-tabling works very well for some people. It does, however, require a number of warnings

Your timetable should never be allowed to over-ride your relationships with family and friends. The people in your life are more important than your timetable, and there will be times when you need to forget the timetable and respond to the needs of your family and friends. People first, plans second.

Your timetable is not your master; you are not its slave. The timetable is your servant, a tool by which you are seeking to have control over your time so that you can better serve and honour the real Master.

Your timetable is neither your judge nor your accuser. Never allow it to usurp that role. It is better to not have a timetable than to have a timetable that is constantly accusing you and generating guilt.

Scheduling daily and weekly goals:

An alternative to detailed timetabling is scheduling goals for either your days or your weeks. These time-focused goals will relate to your mission statement and your short and long-term goals previously identified. They will also assist you to live by your

biblical priorities and principles.

Examples of time-focused goals:

To spend x time each day in prayer and Bible study.

To spend x time each day with your spouse.

To spend x time each day with your children.

To go to bed by x time every night.

To spend x time in physical activity each week.

To maintain contact with specific friends each week.

To intentionally develop your relationship with family members each week.

To allow x time for relaxation each week.

To spend x time on your house and yard each week.

To spend x time in Christian ministry activities each week.

To have x job done by

Some of these daily and weekly goals will be the 'norm' or the 'given' – the way you live your life. Others need to be set for each day and each week.

At the end of each week, decide what you want to achieve during the next week and not that in your diary.

Before you go to bed each night, plan what you intend to do tomorrow, and jot that down if necessary.

For things that take longer than a day and a week, set yourself deadlines – the ideal time by which you should have completed a task, or built a relationship.

This time-focused scheduling of goals has more flexibility than detailed timetables. But even this planning can become a tyrant and a judge if you allow it to.