

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

Colossians 3:16-17 <sup>16</sup>“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. <sup>17</sup>And *whatever* you do in word or deed, *do* all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.”

1. No amount of success at work will ever be adequate to compensate for failure at home.
  2. After God, but before all others, make your mate your top priority. Spend time together alone, touch her, listen to her, be faithful to her, encourage her with words, take care of her financially, laugh together, and be her best friend.
  3. Invest in your children with time, prayer, and encouraging words like, “I love you,” and “I’m proud of you.” Older men swear there’s no pain like child pain. If your children end up doing well, all of your other problems will fit into a thimble.
  4. Most men compartmentalize their family, but not their work. In other words, they think about their work when they’re with their families, but not their families while they’re at work. Tell men to put a time *and mental* boundary up around their work. For example, they could declare, “I will not work after 6:00 p.m.” One man promised to take his wife out to dinner every time he broke the rule.
  5. Let Jesus be your highest and best thought in every situation. Pray about everything. For example, every time you make a phone call, say a silent prayer for 5 seconds as you pick up the receiver. There are many other ways you can pray. Jesus will help you lead a balanced life if you’re in constant communication.
- Commitment - *“...the critical first step to living a life of balance is deciding that it is more important than other measures of “success.” If the pursuit of power, prestige, position, possessions, or even pleasure are your primary goals, then they will dominate your life. If having these things are more important to you than balance, then they will win.”*
  - Perspective - Bentall describes the benefits of taking a retreat from the “rat race” with this comment. *“I had discovered a whole new perspective, simply by stepping out of the rat race for a single day. Perspective is what we need, so that we can gain more wisdom prior to re-entering the battle of everyday living”*
  - Sabbath - Bentall recommends we pay attention to Sabbath as a means to obtain rest and recover perspective. *“The rest of the week is for work. I have now realized that sabbath is for living. These are the days which can help us gain well needed perspective...”*

Here are Eight (8) tips to Finding Balance In Life:

1. PUT GOD FIRST- Christ must be at the center of everything. The Bible teaches us that our one and only priority is to keep Him, His Kingdom, and His righteousness first in everything. His will and our service to Him is our priority.
2. Focus- Be specific about the decisions, goals and objectives, which you establish.
3. Take a Long Term View- Make decisions in the present that can have the greatest positive impact on your future. Short- term decisions must align themselves with established long-term decisions.

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

4. Take Responsibility - You control your choices and are responsible for everything that happens and everything that you commit to.
5. Limit Multi- tasking- Performing several tasks less efficiently only serves to create anxiety, stress, and a sense of being out of control.
6. Turn Off and Tune Out – It is simply not possible or practical to believe that you can be “on” all 24/7/365. As the old saying reminds us, if you attempt to burn the candle from both ends you will either get burned or if successful run out of light twice as fast.
7. Eliminate the Clutter- Don’t allow your life or your day to be or get too full.
8. Plan- Set clear priorities for each area of your life. Remember to always make the decision to choose the activities that will assure you the greatest health, happiness and financial success in the long term.

Six (6) Questions to better Finding Balance In Life:

1. Would you say that you typically have: a) A lot of balance in your life, b) An average amount, or c) Very little balance in your life? What makes you think that?
2. When you think of the word “balance,” as we’re using it here, what thoughts come to your mind – overall, what are your attitudes about “balance”?
3. If you could change it, would you choose to have more balance in your life, or less? Why?
4. In what area of your life, right now, do you have the most balance? (Examples: This could be work, home, family, etc., or even attitudes, behaviors, habits, etc.)
5. In what area of your life, right now, do you have the least amount of balance?
6. If you wanted (more / less) balance in you’re life, what is one thing you could do, starting now, to achieve that?

Each and everyday urgent, unexpected and critical events threaten to overwhelm established and set priorities for our day and lives. At each of these impasses we are confronted with decisions, which threaten to redirect our energies and directly affect our balance. To successfully deal with the chaos of confusion that is constantly thrust upon us daily, each of us needs to find a rock that stabilizes and secures us. I would suggest that you would find that rock in Jesus.

Consider these Five (5) Pitfalls to avoid to put you on the path to both find balance in your life.

Five (5) Life Balance Pitfalls to avoid:

- 1) Stress at Work – One-fourth of employees rate their jobs as the number-one stressors in their lives.
- 2) Financial Concern- Money woes matter effecting and affecting every area of your life created serious

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

unbalance.

3) Short Fuse – If everything and everyone bothers you, more than likely the real issue that you are dealing with is that your lack of balance is draining your sense of humor, tolerance, and patience.

4) Complicated Lifestyles – Complicated lifestyles tend to be busy. Busy often causes stress. Stress causes your balance to get off center. To find balance and satisfaction in your life simplify.

5) Living by Default – Don't allow your balance to be hijacked by others. Take back your life.

As a final thought on this subject, I would like you to consider that finding balance in your life is both energizing and liberating. It allows you to be who God intended you to be. In addition, when your life is balanced you are on the real path to great decision-making. To that end, it is important that you schedule time each and everyday on your calendars for sufficient rest, exercise, and relaxation if you seek to enjoy a healthy and balanced life.

## "The Well-Rounded Christian"

Colossians 3:16,17.....August 30, 1998

Much of life is a question of maintaining balance. Any athletic team knows that they need a balance between offense and defense and between quickness and strength. In our personal finances we work to maintain a balance between income and expenses. In teaching we try to keep the proper balance between content and creativity. Too much emphasis on content and the subject becomes boring, too much emphasis on creativity and you have a lot of fun but communicate little. We all have to find the balance between diet, exercise and rest. Too much to one extreme or the other and we begin to hamper healthy living.

There must also be balance in our Christian life. There must be a balance between knowledge and application. In the book of Colossians we see that the first two chapters deal with right thinking . . .with our knowledge and understanding. The last two chapters deal with application or how we live. The two go together. Paul is urging us to be stable and balanced in our Christianity.

Do you see how important this is in our society? The image many people have of a Christian today is: someone who shouts, sweats, wears too much make-up and talks in a strange and phoney tone of voice. They view a "born-again" Christian as someone who is obnoxious, intolerant and against everything fun. This is due to a lack of balance. What the church needs, what non-Christians need are balanced believers who are stable, authentic, and who live their everyday lives with the Spirit of Jesus.

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

In Colossians 3:16,17 Paul gives us four characteristics of a well-rounded or balanced Christian.

## BIBLE-SATURATED

First, Paul tells us that we are to "Let the Word of Christ, dwell in you richly". Paul encourages these believers to allow the message of the Bible to dominate, saturate and motivate their living. The word *dwell* means "to feel at home." Paul urges us to have such a relationship with God's Word that it feels at home in our life . . . or we feel at home with it.

The Bible should be at the heart of our existence. We draw our direction from it. We should find our comfort and strength in it. Being saturated in the Bible does several things for us: 1) it helps us know the truth. 2) It enables us to recognize error 3) It provides answers to difficult questions.

So, how do we become "Bible-saturated"?

- We must **know** the message. In other words we must read the Bible. A Christian is a person who knows God's Word. We must read daily. The person who is saturated by God's Word will never find dust on their Bible.

Did you know that half of the books of the Bible can be read in less than 45 minutes each, and many of them in less than 20? It has been demonstrated that the entire Old and New Testaments can be read aloud in less than 71 hours. Do you realize that this means that in less than fifteen minutes a day we could read the Bible cover to cover in under a year? With this in mind, how do we account for our woeful lack of knowledge of the Bible? How much time do you spend thoughtfully reading the Word of God?

- We must **understand** the message carefully. Hearing and understanding are two different things. How many men have heard their wives say, "you aren't listening to me!". It's not that we weren't hearing . . . it's that we are not "getting it". In order to survive in marriage (and in any relationship) we must engage in active listening. We must ask clarifying questions. We must make sure that we are hearing correctly. This is what we also must do in our relationship to God's Word. We must interact with it to make sure we understand what is being said.
  - We must **apply** the message practically. Mark Twain said, "Most people are bothered those passages of Scripture which they cannot understand; but as for me, I have always noticed that the passages in Scripture which trouble me most are those which I understand." Twain understood. The Bible does not teach us about forgiveness so that we can discuss forgiveness . . . it's so we will forgive! The Bible doesn't teach us about peace so we can write nice sounding songs . . . it is so we might know a real calm in the midst of the troubled times of life. The Word dwells in us "richly" when it is yielding some effect in our lives. In order for us to apply the Biblical message there are several things we could be doing.
1. Interact with the Text you can do this by underlining important passages and jotting down questions in the margin.
  2. Meditate on the Text In narrative (where the Bible is telling a story) look at the situation from the perspective of the various characters. Imagine yourself as the Prodigal Son, and then as the elder brother, and then as the Father. Turn a text like a jewel and feel it fully.

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

3. Memorize the Text Jesus responded to Satan with scripture. You can't do this unless you know what the Bible says from memory. You don't have to memorize big chunks at a time. Start with a verse a month. Strive to move to a verse a week.

Each of these practices will help you to "let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly".

## MUTUAL MINISTRY

The second characteristic in this passage is that the well-balanced believer is aware that they are involved in mutual or a shared ministry. Let me explain what I mean. Our text tells us that we are to "teach and admonish one another with all wisdom". We teach someone when we help them understand something they didn't know before. We have a responsibility to help each other grow in knowledge and understanding. But we must also be willing to "admonish" one another. We must remind each other of the truth that we have forgotten in our living. We are to teach and be taught; admonish and be willing to be admonished.

This is contrary to the ways of the world. We live in a world that urges us to be independent. We are told to "pull our own strings" and warned not to become "dependent" on anyone. As a result of this teaching we have become isolated from each other. But this is not what God wants for His people. God calls us to be involved with each other.

God has designed the church so that we are INTER-dependent. In fact, he uses the analogy of a human body. He says the Christian community is like a body: the body has different parts and different functions but must work together to be effective. Pauls tells us that God has given us various gifts (or skills) that can be used in ministry. We must work together!

Are you trying to function as an isolated Christian? Perhaps you feel that you can worship God just as effectively at home as in a church. You may be able to worship well in isolation but you cannot grow! In order to grow you need to "be connected". The Christian life is a matter of giving and receiving. At times we will need others to minister to us . . . other times we will do the ministering.

And so it is in the church. It is not meant to be one-man operation. God has called us to all be involved in ministry. For some it is helping in areas such as: Sunday School, the Nursery, Children's Church, Kid's Club, Youth Groups. For others it is: Singing in the Choir, Playing bells, bringing special music. Some will work behind the scenes copying, mailing, cleaning repairing. Some will serve by giving financial support, gaining vision for the church, managing the resources of the church. There are hundreds of ways to serve in this local church. And when everyone is doing what they can do . . . we become what God wants us to be.

## SPIRIT OF CELEBRATION

One of the ways we are to teach and admonish one another is through "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs". In other words, we are to be a joyful, singing body. We should be celebrating grace! Someone has said that "a successful Christian life involves attention to three books: God's Book, the Bible; the pocketbook; and the hymn book." There is wisdom in those words. There is nothing that expresses and touches the depth of our emotion like music.

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

The right music during a movie or TV show can cause you to smile or cry. A well placed song can drive home a point better than a myriad of words. It only makes sense to say that Christians should be using music to teach, worship and encourage each other. Worship should be a joyful time.

A young girl became a Christian in an exciting revival at her church and was baptized the closing Sunday morning. That afternoon she ran through the house singing and dancing. Her sour grandfather rebuked her with these words, "You ought to be ashamed of yourself! Just joined the church and singing and dancing on the Lord's Day!"

Crushed by her grandfather's attitude, the little girl went out to the barn, climbed up on the corral fence, and observed an old mule standing there with a sad, droopy face and bleary eyes. As she reached over and patted the mule sympathetically, she said, "Don't cry, ole mule. I guess you've just got the same kind of religion that grandpa has!"

Some of the greatest memories of our life are tied to music. Music helps us establish roots. Think about the lyrics of some of the great hymns of the faith:

Are you not stirred when you sing, *"When peace like a river, attendeth my way; when sorrow like sea billows roll, whatever my lot, thou has taught me to say: It is well, it is well with my soul."* And isn't there something uplifting when we sing, *"Amazing love! How can it be that thou my God should die for me?"* And don't we nod in agreement when we sing *"When I survey the wondrous cross on which the Prince of glory died, my richest gain I count but loss and pour contempt on all my pride"?*

Can you really think about these words from "How Great Thou Art" and not be moved to tears: *"And when I think that God His Son not sparing, sent Him to die, I scarce can take it in . . . that on the cross my burden gladly bearing, he bled and died to take away my sin."* And wouldn't communion seem a little less special if we didn't sing "In Remembrance"?

But it's not just the great hymns of the faith. Think of some of the choruses: the wonderful Jack Hayford song: *"Majesty, worship His majesty! Unto Jesus, be all glory, honor, and praise."* And the powerful truth in the words of Stephen Curtis Chapman, *"His strength is perfect when our strength is gone. He'll carry us, when we can't carry on. Raised in His power, the weak become strong. His strength is perfect, His strength is perfect."* Music touches our soul. Many of us sing "Pass it One" and remember a campfire someplace. Others sing "We are One in the Spirit" and remember our fellowship with a group of believers at a formative time. Music is a part of who we are. In truth, we probably learn more of our theology from our music than from preaching.

A great deal has been made of trying to distinguish between Psalms, Hymns and Spiritual songs. We probably shouldn't go to far with the making of needless distinctions. However do notice a few things,

- Our expression should take in a variety of forms and styles. Christians endlessly (and foolishly) debate what kinds of music are appropriate for worship. It's a foolish debate because all kinds of music can be used in worship. It can be the majestic theologically rich hymn, or the simple chorus. It can be in a country style, a Gregorian chant, rock or classical. What matters is the expression of the heart. In fact, if you move only to one kind of music you cut off the roots that some people have.
- Our music should be anchored in the Word of God. Remember the context! These songs come from "the Word of Christ dwelling in our hearts . . ." It is just as easy to sing bad theology as to teach or

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

read it. Like anything else, we must evaluate WHAT we are singing. Because we learn theology from our music we must choose our music carefully.

The point here is simple: the person who has received God's grace is a person who wants to express their joy. If you have a good voice you should sing well, if you have a fair voice you should sing fair, if you have a croaky voice . . . you should croak out praises to the Lord. The point is not whether or not you are "in tune" it's that we should give expression to the joy that is in our heart.

May I suggest something?

- Go to a Christian Bookstore and buy a hymnal. Read the lyrics and sing through the songs.
- Memorize a song
- Write a Song and sing it to the Lord
- Put on some headphones and put on some Christian songs and let the music move your soul
- Make up a melody for one of the Psalms and sing it to the Lord

Make a conscious effort to worship the Lord for the greatness of His grace.

## GOD HONORING CONSISTENCY

Paul brings his thought to a fitting peak with the final words in this passage: "And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." (Col. 3:17) It seems like the perfect conclusion doesn't it? The person who is well-balanced should be revealing Christ consistently.

Kent Hughes writes: "There are few exhortations in Scripture that are more comprehensive than this one. "Word or deed" takes in everything in life. "Deeds" can be preaching, teaching, eating, exercising, driving, cleaning house, shopping, visiting, working, playing (basketball, soccer, tennis, fishing, even watching) - everything! Our words are everything that passes our lips, even in unguarded moments. Everything we say or do is to be done "in the name of the Lord Jesus."

A strange dog came to a preacher's house, and his three sons soon became quite fond of it. It so happened that there were three white hairs in the animal's tail. One day an advertisement was seen in the newspaper about a lost dog which fitted that description perfectly. "In the presence of my three boys," said the minister, "we carefully separated the three white hairs and removed them." The real owner discovered where the straying canine had found a home and came to claim him. The dog showed every sign of recognition, so the man was ready to take him away. Quickly the minister spoke up, "Didn't you say the dog would be known by three white hairs in its tail?" The owner, unable to find the identifying feature, was forced to leave. The minister said later, "We kept the dog, but I lost my three boys for Christ." His sons no longer had confidence in what their father professed. He hadn't practiced what he preached!

The world is watching the believer. It is interested to see if we truly believe what we say. How can they tell? They watch our lives. The test of genuine faith is a God-Honoring consistency in our lives. Now, don't get me wrong. A God-honoring consistency is not perfection. That would be an impossible standard to reach in this life. However, even when we make a mistake and fail we should handle those situations in a Christian manner. We should be willing to take responsibility for our actions (no excuses or blaming others) and be willing to make things right with another.

# Leading a Balanced Christian Life

Paul wants us to allow Christianity to infect every area of our life:

- the way we conduct business
- the entertainment and hobbies we are involved in
- the way we spend our money
- the way we serve in the church
- the way we respond to the needs of those around us
- the way we react to those who offend us

So, here's the big question: What are you holding back from the Lord? What area of your life is "off limits" to the Lord? Maybe it is your business, or sports, or your thought life. Maybe you want God to stay out of your relationships or your sex life. Maybe you are holding him at arms length when it comes to your recreational activities. Perhaps for some it would be an easier question to ask: where DOES the Lord have influence in your life. Is your relationship with Christ something that only is significant on Sunday? Paul calls us to follow Christ fully and whole-heartedly.

## CONCLUSIONS

I've learned something about doing laundry . . . when you put the clothes in the washer it is important that you spread them out evenly in the basket . . . if you don't, the washer will make a terrible racket. If it does, it means the load is unbalanced and you need to reorganize the clothes. Let me ask you: Is your Christian life in-balance or out of balance? Are you banging around and making a lot of noise or are things running smoothly in your life?

Do you need to begin reading the Bible? If so, find a good modern translation; something you will be able to understand. Then, dig in. Underline, meditate, memorize and obey.

Do you need to let others into your life? Do you need to find a way to serve the body of Christ? If so, make an appointment and come talk to us . . . we can help you.

Do you need to allow joy into your faith? Perhaps you should try singing to the Lord. Pay attention to the words of the hymns we sing. Dare to express your faith in song. Don't worry about those sitting around you . . . focus on the Lord who enjoys the praise of His children.

Finally, do you need to integrate your faith into your everyday living. Look for ways to be more God-honoring at the restaurant, at home, in the field, in the check-out lane of a store. Be ruthless with yourself. Confront the excuses, expose the duplicity, push for balance.

You see, my friends, the world will never believe what we say about Jesus until they see that WE believe what we say about Jesus.