

Baptist Men's Missionary Union

Topic: Balancing work, Church and Family

Someone once said, Work, Church and Family are three balls. The first is made up on a rubber, but the other two are made of glass and you have to be careful how you handle them. This is because if the first drops from your hand, it will bounce back but if the other two drop from your hand, they might be shattered and returning them to their original state might be impossible. Does this sound true? We shall find the answer together as we go through this talk.

Although our various roles can seem to be in conflict with each other, they are in fact complementary expressions of our singular responsibility: to “love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your strength.” Allow this truth to give you perspective: your responsibilities in the home, at church, and in the workplace are not enemies of each other. Your roles can come together in harmony, under your single commitment to worship the one God who in Jesus Christ has loved you to the uttermost.

Definitions:

Work: The duties or activities that are part of a job or occupation. It can also be defined as a place where somebody is employed. It is also the physical or mental effort directed at doing or making something.

Church: A religious service that takes place in a building so designated for that purpose or to encourage faith.

Family: A group of people living together and functioning as a single household, usually consisting of parents and their children. It can be said to be a group of people who are closely related by birth, marriage, or adoption. It is also all the people who are descended from a common ancestor. This is also a group whose members are related in origin, characteristics, or occupation, having a common language and ancestry.

Balancing: Finding or maintain an equilibrium (to achieve or maintain, or cause somebody or something to achieve or maintain, a position of steadiness while resting on a narrow base), complementary, harmonising, matching, corresponding, stabilising, equalising, steadying

STEPS TO TAKE TO STRIKE A BALANCE

1. CLARIFY YOUR VALUES

- **Decide what your values are for yourself and your family.** A value is a principle, standard, or quality considered worthwhile or desired. Values guide our actions and structure our lives.
- **Think carefully and deeply.** Most of us have some general sense of our values, but this is often vague. Many of our values remain unconscious. These values -

the ones we hold but are not entirely aware of - often contribute to feelings of stress; this stress can be understood and managed once we become more in tune with our values.

- **Consider values that conflict with one another.** For example, what if you believe that one should be at work early and you also believe that the kitchen should always be clean before one leaves the house? How do you rectify these competing values? Such conflicts are stressful and can leave you feeling drained and unsatisfied until you examine these values and reflect on how they interact.

2. SET GOALS AND EXPECTATIONS

- **Set goals.** Goals are important in our lives and help us decide how we use our time.
- **Distinguish between concrete goals and more abstract goals.** Some goals may be concrete and specific, like the two examples above. Other goals, however, will likely be more abstract, relational and more reflective of your well-being and place in the world. For example, you may strive to build supportive relationships with friends, raise healthy and responsible children, or cultivate a deeper and more spiritual understanding of yourself.
- **Rank goals.** To ease role strains, we can choose to put some goals on hold, let go some, and modify others as needed. Think about the things you want to most out of your life when determining this ranking.
- **Consider social and individual expectations, perceptions and attitudes.** Everyone has ideas about how things "should" be done and how people "should" behave in certain situations. Often these expectations, perceptions, and attitudes come from a combination of our own individual values and generally accepted social norms.
- **Be flexible and adaptable to be able to balance Church, Family and work needs.** Forgive yourself when things are missed and don't get done. In other situations, accept that things will pop up that will require your attention and may result in you having to readjust your goals.

3. MANAGING TIME AND PRIORITISING

- **Set priorities.** Prioritizing is central to effective time management. Juggling work and home life and trying to find time for time with friends and family and on your own is not easy.
- **Measure your goals against your available time.** Ask yourself what you need to do on a given day to reach the goal you have set for yourself.
- **Set boundaries and limits.** These determine how you take charge of your time and space and help you get in touch with and manage your emotions. Boundaries express the extent of your responsibilities, power, and agency; they also inform others what you are willing to do and accept. They are an imaginary line of protection that you draw around yourself.

4. Planning and Communicating Effectively

- **Get organised on a day-to-day level.** Create daily routines and a structured plan each day rather than reacting to whatever comes up. Plan ahead and anticipate your needs. Set priorities, work smarter not harder.
- **Build breaks into your daily routine.** It's good practice to make time for other activities besides work so that your days are balanced, enjoyable and fulfilling.
- **Block out time your calendar for yourself, your family and friends.** You block out time for meetings at work, so apply the same principle to your home life? Scheduling this time with family in advance will make it hard to cancel at the last minute and helps set that time in stone.
- **Take evenings off.**
- **Cut out time-wasting activities.** We waste a lot of time in our daily lives thanks to television, Internet, video games, etc. Try removing any unnecessary distractions that don't really add any value to or enhance your life.
- **Talk to family and friends about your responsibilities outside the family like workload and Church activities.** Address how they feel about your work-life balance. By keeping the lines of communication open, you are avoiding building up resentment among those affected by your actions.

5. LETTING GO

- **Re-assess what it means to be in control.** Many times we feel we have more control if we do everything ourselves. However, this can keep us from reaching our real goals; we're not super-humans after all!
- **Delegate or divide work to accomplish priority needs and wants.** Although many of us resist reallocating home and work tasks for fear of losing control, we stand to gain from delegating work.
- **Make compromises.** Try to find ways to simplify your life where possible and given your particular circumstances. Get rid of the notion of being a perfectionist. **Let go of the guilt.** Stop the burden of guilt from hanging over your day. Many people feel guilty for being at work instead of at home or in Church or the other way round. This is a zero-sum game. Guilt is one of the greatest wastes of emotional energy
- **Incorporate relaxation and downtime into your schedule.**
- **Avoid negative people in your life.** Surround yourself with people who boost your energy and make you feel positive, directed, and grounded, while avoiding those who gossip, complain, or have generally negative attitudes.

ACHIEVE AN INTEGRATED LIFE

- Keep things in perspective. Create harmony in your life--a mixture of work, family and friends. Remember, there is no single formula for balancing work and family. It is a personal decision how one combines spouse, children and career.

THE PROCESS OF MAINTAINING A BALANCE

The Minimum and Beyond: Begin by making sure you are meeting the minimum standards for faithfulness in each of your roles.

Vertical Over Horizontal: We should also beware also of the *fear of man*.

Routines: We should build routines into our life.

The Rest Day: The Old Testament provides the Sabbath principle which calls us to take regular periods of rest.

A Timesheet: It is important to keep track of how many hours we work week by week.

Be Present: Avoid the pitfall of being bodily present in one role, but consumed in your mind with another.

Seek Counsel and Build a Support Network: Ask for help and allow yourself to be helped and contributed to. Get your children involved--work together as a team. Recruit friends, family, neighbours, bosses, work colleagues, etc. and ask for their support.