

KEEPING BALANCE

Ten Values for God's People

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69% of Americans in a CNN poll said, "I would like to slow down." On the other hand, Americans are spending 8½ hours less per week at leisure than a generation ago. The principle of balance seems a value that is universally admired and universally ignored. The universe is built on the principle of balance. If the earth were not in perfect balance, vibrations would destroy life. Variations in the ecosystem create chain reactions. The human body has 9 different systems in balance with each other. God made balance as a basic principle in His universe...and God is interested in you living a balanced life. Psalm 127:2 (Living Bible) **"It is senseless for you to work so hard from early morning until late at night. God wants his loved ones to get their proper rest."** God wants each of us to value that balance between work and rest...between productivity and renewal...so that we know life as God meant for it to be...abundant.

Build your life around Jesus Christ. Matthew 22:37-39 **"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and soul and mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it. Love your neighbor as yourself."**

Jesus summarized the whole Bible: Love God and love people. Jesus as God's love in the flesh makes such love possible for us. Jesus is the most balanced person whoever lived and if He is at our center He will teach us how to be balanced. Life is like a wheel. At the center or hub is the core. Out of that hub are all the spokes of life which represent relationships, family, career, finances, dreams, goals and every area of life. You will build your life around something. Something is going to be at the center. The center or hub is connected to the axle and the axle is connected to the source of power. If you have anything except God at the center of your life, at the hub, you will have a power shortage. Nothing else has enough power to help you make it through all the things you're going to go through. Anyone or anything else and you will be out of whack. Christ alone gives stability, control, and power.

Accept your humanity. Ecclesiastes 10:15(Good News Bible) **Only someone too stupid to find his way home would wear himself out with work.**

When you overwork, you're saying, "It all depends on me!" Fact is: you are not the general manager of the universe. Stop trying to have all the answers and solving everyone's problems...trying to meet every need and fulfill everyone's expectations. Recognize that you have limitations. You are a human being, not Superman/Superwoman. We let the expectations of others manipulate us. Even God can't please everybody. One wants it to rain, another wants it to be sunny. Only a fool would try to do what even God can't do. You cannot please everybody or meet everybody's expectations. God is our model and God rested. Why? Because God needed to? No. But as an example for us. We cannot do everything. Not everything is worth doing in the first place. We are human, not God.

Limit your Labor. Exodus 20:9 **"Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God."**

In God's Top Ten List is a commandment to rest. Why? Because God wired us to be in a rhythm of work and rest. Our best requires rest. Just like a bow and arrow, a bow that is constantly strung tight loses its power. It has to be unstrung periodically. Sabbath simply means "rest." Why? Because **"The Sabbath was made to benefit man."**(Jesus in Mark 2:27). It is for our benefit. It doesn't matter which day we choose as long as it's God's day. What do you do on God's day? Three things: Rest, Recharge, and Refocus. Rest your body. Recharge your relationships. Refocus on God.

Adjust your values. Jesus in Mark 8:36 **"What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul?"**

We become possessed by our possessions. The things we are managing are actually managing us. Americans confuse work and worth; we think that what I do is the same as what I am. We think that my identity is all wrapped up in my career and my net worth determines my self worth. That is a lie. It is not true. Your identity has nothing to do with your career; it has to do with who God made you to be. I have never heard a single person say with their dying breath, "I wish I'd spent more time at the office." Not one. I have heard people say "I wish I'd spent more time with my kids." or "I wish I'd got to know God better." or "I wish I'd focused on the things that really matter." Adjust your values.

Nourish your inner life. Matthew 11:28 **"Come to me...and I will give you rest..."**

A very important part of living a balanced life is learning how to nourish and tend the inner fire that God puts within each of us that gives us a passion and a reason to get up in the morning. It's a fire that has to be tended. The more I tend that inner fire, the more strength and joy I have to face life. If you find yourself facing life from a very dead, cold, empty vantage point know that you have allowed that inner fire to go out or to be dimmed. Our society encourages us to live externally, to live from the outside in, to make sure that everything looks really good on the outside and hope somehow we can cover up what's going on, on the inside. What does it matter if it all looks good externally and on the inside there is death and bitterness and rage and frustration and unforgiveness? God tells us we are to live our lives from the inside out not from the outside in. That has to do with tending that inner fire. What are you neglecting in your life right now because you are too busy?

Commit your daily schedule to God. Psalms 31:15 **"My times are in Your hands, O God."**

Each day, you and I have to commit our schedules to God, knowing for an absolute fact, that life is not going to cooperate with our schedule. We can make our lists, but God alone knows what you or I are supposed to be doing on any given day. Matthew 9 is the story of Jesus on his way to heal a dying child. A woman who has a chronic illness of 20 years stops Jesus - and Jesus stops and heals her. I am certain people asked, "Why can't she wait?" The Bible doesn't answer that, but it does tell us that Jesus understood this principle. Jesus understood that God knew where Jesus was supposed to be at any given moment in time and Jesus was willing to be flexible and let God show him where he was supposed to spend his time.

Enjoy the moment. Ecclesiastes 3:13 **"That everyone may find satisfaction in all his toil - this is the gift of God."**

We tend to be such forward thinkers that we often forget to stop and smell the roses. Beware of the trap of "when and then" thinking. When I achieve this goal, then I will be happy. The moment you get there, you'll be thinking "What's next?" Learn to be happy in the NOW while you're working on goals. God says to work on goals, but the goal of life is not accomplishments, that is humanism; it is not acquisition, that is materialism; it is not pleasure, that is hedonism. There are 2 reasons you were put here on this earth, to: 1) Know God, and enjoy a relationship with Him, and 2) Use the talents and gifts He gave you to serve others because that builds character and reaches people for eternity. Life is a test. God sets two goals for us: 1) Love God; 2) Love People...and while you're doing it, love life. As in hiking, the rest is in the climb...and we don't arrive until we get to heaven.

"Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy." (Exodus 20:8) **"So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath."** (Mark 2:28) Is the Lord of Creation, Lord of your re-creation? Do you keep it holy so you can be whole? Do you keep a balance in your life that helps you know God's gift of life?