

THE WORK OF A LIFETIME



*A working man's guide to
balancing life and ministry.*

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By Francisco Martinez

About the Author

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*To the men of Faith Bible Church who run hard after Christ and strive to
balance life and ministry*

*To my wife, the greatest help in balancing life and ministry, whom I get to
“enjoy life with all the days of my fleeting life... [my] reward in life and in [my]
toil...” (Ecclesiastes 9:9)*

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INTRODUCTION

"I'm not afraid of failure; I'm afraid of succeeding at things that don't matter."

– William Carey

This book is about helping the ordinary hard-working man overcome failure, which results from a life busy with things that don't matter. Working men, laymen, churchmen are constantly bombarded with choices every moment that will either lead to a successful day or a lost day. These moments, days, and years compound over time up until we come before the Lord to present to Him all the good or bad that we have done (2 Corinthians 5:10). This book is about helping men be faithful to fulfill their duty and succeed at the things that matter to maximize their eternity.

The authors of *Gospel at Work* ask the foundational question to this book: "Does God really give us multiple assignments and expect us to pick the one he wants us to fail at? If not, how do you balance it all without failing? How do you remain fruitful and faithful at work when you also need to be fruitful and faithful as a spouse, parent, neighbor, and church member? How do you do it all in the mere 168 hours that comprise a week" (Traeger & Gilbert, p. 88)

No one grows up wanting to fail. Even if that were the case, then failing would mean success for that person, proving the point. We should want to finish the race that is before us and finish well. What a tragedy to finish the race only to have been disqualified at the end because we ran in the wrong lane. Christ warned of this danger in Matthew 7:21-23, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, in Your name did we not prophesy, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name do many miracles? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

So how do we do it all? Failing in life is not an option for a born-again Christian. Failure from not accomplishing things we set out to do helps us triumph in the long run. Failure in our divine assignments, on the other hand, can be a tragedy. It is neither okay to be succeeding in one area of life at the expense of others or even be successful in everything except for a single responsibility. Failure in any assignment God has given us is not an option. Godward success is turning in all assignments from the Lord with passing colors. Is this even your desire? If you picked this book up, it most likely is. Born-again men should desire and make it their ambition to be faithful and fruitful in this life for God's glory. Success is just that: faithfulness to the obligations God has set before us. Earthly success is focused on single achievements, whereas biblical success is comprehensive. God wants the whole man, not just parts of him. If He only has a part of him, then he's got none of him (Revelation 3:15-16). Earthly success is subjective. Biblical success is objective. Finite and fallen men judge worldly success. The holy God of the universe judges biblical success. Worldly success leaves us as ultimate failures in the eyes of God (Matthew 16:26). Biblical success leaves us pitied by human beholders but eternally rewarded by God (Matthew 10:28-30).

Joshua is an example of a faithful man who followed orders and fulfilled his duty and, thus, achieved Godward success. Joshua was a loyal comrade to Moses and a servant of the Lord. And as soon as the great leader and prophet, Moses, died (Joshua 1:1), Joshua was the next man up. God promised to give Joshua all that He had pledged to Moses (1:3) and promised never to leave him nor forsake him (1:5). Joshua only had to do one thing: "Only be strong and very courageous; be careful to do according to all the law which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go" (1:7).

Did you notice that? God promises success if Joshua was faithful. God is sovereign, and man is responsible. God promises success and prosperity twice in

this passage, but three times He charges Joshua to be strong and courageous to faithfulness to His word. Was Joshua successful? One of my favorite verses in all of the scriptures provides us the answer: “Not one of the good promises which the LORD had made to the house of Israel failed; all came to pass (Joshua 21:45).

Here it shows that God accomplished what He had said He would do because He is a faithful God. But underlying that statement is that Joshua chose to serve the Lord and fulfill his duty (Joshua 24:45). Joshua was faithful and succeeded.

What is biblical success? Success is faithful to God’s standards and His unique calling in your life. Ian Duguid says it well, “in place of serving the goals of our own personal kingdoms, whatever they might be – comfort, approval, money, and so on – the successful person puts first God’s kingdom. He is willing to give up any of these things if they get in the way of serving God, or to use them for God as resources over which he is a steward who will one day be called to account (Matthew 25:14-30). The successful steward is not the one who is entrusted with the most resources, of whatever kind. It is the steward who is faithful with the resources with which he has been entrusted (Matthew 25:21)*” (Duguid).

To clarify, this book is not a discourse on biblical success but the act that leads to a faithful and successful life: balancing all our duties. This book is about helping you to live a faithful life by balancing all the obligations in life so that you can hear the words “well done, good and faithful servant.” Don’t you want to be like Joshua and the successful steward? Don’t you want success in the Christian life? Then we must learn to balance all God has given us and achieve what matters most.

Unfortunately, it’s easier said than done. Things are just not the way they ought to be. Living in a fallen world with fallen humans, men struggle with taking on too much, doing the wrong things, or things that are our wish list. We take on more than we can chew. We say yes to all the ministry opportunities only to neglect our home life or work. Look, some men need to be challenged to do more. They need to stop spectating church and attending bible study and start serving and building up the saints.

How do we ensure amid the chaos and circumstances of our life that we fulfill what matters most? This is what this book is about—helping you balance all the obligations in your life and ministry. This is what matters most: we fulfill our duties and responsibilities that come from God, despite how we might feel or what we desire to do.

How do we do it all well when things just aren't going well? When there is too much on your plate? When you have committed to too many things, and there doesn't seem to be enough time to be faithful? What happens when you have a ministry or family crisis and no margin left in your life? Despite everything crumbling around us, we should remain steadfast and keep up with our finances, yards, and making our beds.

The answer isn't to throw up your hands and decide one responsibility doesn't matter. At that point, you are moving towards idleness, which is sin. Failing is not an option when it is a God-given requirement. Saying one area is of the utmost importance at the expense of others is idolatry. "We can't sacrifice God-given responsibilities on the altar of [another responsibility]" (Traeger & Gilbert, p. 91). The solution isn't also to do the bare minimum to pass. We should want to excel and prosper.

We should desire to restore things to how they ought to have been before the fall. We won't do so perfectly, but we can aim for such a life because we have Christ in and through us. We can aim for a life that we are still faithful in fulfilling our duty even in the most arduous trials. We can experience spiritual blessings even during persecution and difficult circumstances. We are not to waver, but to thrive and give God glory just as Christ did as He hung on the cross for the sins of His elect.

Our Maker and Commissioner who has called us to follow, love, and worship Him has assigned us, as part of our discipleship, many obligations, responsibilities, tasks, and assignments. The great majority of what we do in a

day and a lifetime is fulfilling such duties and nothing more. The act of being faithful in our assignment is a work of a lifetime. Tim Challies describes this well:

Even the best of jobs and the most satisfying of vocations demand close attention to duty. The pastor must dutifully prepare sermons, plan services, visit parishioners, petition God in prayer. The controlling question for his ministry is not “What do I want to do?” but “What must I do?” To be faithful in his calling, he must be dutiful in it. And his duty does not end in his ministry, for he has duties to his wife and children, to his friends and neighbors, to his home and property. He lives a worthy life when he faithfully considers his obligations to each of these groups, his obligations within each of these spheres, then fulfills them with diligence.

What is true of the pastor is true of the electrician, the engineer, the entrepreneur. It is true of the student, the homemaker, the retiree. What is true of him and his life is true of us and ours, no matter the particulars. Each life comes with its duties and each day its opportunities to meet them. We can hardly boast we have lived a worthy life if we succeed in what we like to do but fail in what we must do, if we succeed in our passions but fail in our obligations. The successful life is the one that accounts seriously for its duties and that meets them with diligence. It is through the successive completion of little duties that we fulfill our *great* callings* (Challies).

We have work that must be done, including overcoming that temptation to do what we want to do. To do this requires we balance our lives so that we can faithfully maximize all that has been given to us so that we can not only find prosperity in this life but eternal success in the next.

Faithfully fulfilling these duties will be accounted for in judgment day (2 Corinthians 5:10) and will resonate not just in time but also in eternity. The degree to which we can accomplish what must be done is the degree through which we can go through life with joy, peace, and blessing. We must learn to trust the sovereignty of God in his mundane assignments and realize that the only way

to do the work of a lifetime is to do the work of a day, and the only way to do the work of a day is to do the duty of a moment.

Who's this for?

If you have gotten this far and not tuned out yet, this is for you. This book is for those who want to steward their talents, time, treasures, truth, and tribe well. This is a book for men who wish to fulfill their tasks and be faithful to the people in their life in fulfilling the great commission of making disciples.

Specifically, this book is for the working man. The layman. The churchman. The man who has not - yet - been called to full-time ministry and cannot consolidate his work and ministry (or can he?). This is a book for the man not sitting idly in complacency but for the many who are ambitious for the cause of Christ and many obligations.

While I hope those comfortable and lazy read this are challenged, their complacent hearts may not get their hands on this book. But for those men who desire to be faithful and successful with what the Lord has given them, this book is for you.

In other words, I wrote this for men like me. I have been a Christian for about 13 years now but was not raised in a Christian home. I grew up with an amazing Father who worked harder than anybody I knew; he's also the ultimate perfectionist. I learned that men are meant to carry heavy loads and just do hard things.

I am married to the ultimate, godly woman. While I am at 80-hour workweek kind of career, she is at home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, doing the most demanding job of us all: parenting four small children - under the ages of 7 - during a pandemic. She is the ultimate proverbs 31 woman.

While writing this and finishing the training center, our church's 3-year church-based seminary program, we also moved. We've also gone through trials at work and in life. We've gone through a so-called year-long pandemic. Writing

this has challenged me. It has left me feeling like a hypocrite. It has also been the Lord's kindness to teach me what I need to write here to encourage other men. I am now better equipped to approach life in the future.

I also know what it means to succeed in one area while failing at another. I idolized ministry. I believed being a preacher and pastor or missionary was the only way I could fulfill my calling. Thus, we entrenched ourselves in ministry. But it caused me to struggle at work. While my numbers were good, my posture was not. Thankfully I had godly men at work to admonish and reprove me. I had to learn to be content. I had to learn to deny my dreams to be faithful at work and before the Lord. I knew that being in full-time ministry was not more holy than selling surgical devices. I learned to make it my ambition to lead a quiet life (1 Thessalonians 4:12) and to put my head down and work. I learned - and still am - how to balance life and ministry.

This is for the working man carrying many burdens but aspires to live all of life as ministry. He wants to be faithful and excellent. He does not shy away from work. He wants to be effective and useful to the Lord. The man who struggles but aims towards balancing all things well for the glory of God.

To my beloved pastors and full-time brothers, they have a sweet blessing to be able to intertwine their work and their church life. What a privilege and high calling. I hope this man uses this resource to help him better shepherd the majority of the flock. For the rest of us ordinary guys, we are still called to do the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11). We are still called to shepherd our families and work heartily unto the Lord. We have a different set of obligations than the full-timer.

No matter the season, capacity, family situation, trials, the number of spheres of influences, the people you come across daily, we all struggle to restore the balance we once had before the fall. But we must set out to regain it by focusing on priorities to accomplish what matters most. This is the work of a lifetime.

PART 1: THEOLOGY



Chapter 1

Not How Things Ought to Be

From the beginning stages of life, we go through a perpetual battle learning to balance. When we were babies, we stumbled and hurt ourselves as we learned to stand and walk. As children, we had to learn how to ride a bike and rollerblades. As we got teen years, we learn to ride our skateboards. We learn to balance football practice, chores, homework, SATs, and college applications in high school. We entered college years and had to learn how to balance work, our degree, internships, friendships, credit cards, and taxes - all without the safety net of our parents (well, for some of us). After college, we have to balance marriage, children, careers, and more. And so it continues.

As Christians, if we want to be faithful in all areas of our lives despite all the juggling we have to do, we must uphold all areas of our life excellently because we will give an account to the Lord (2 Corinthians 5:10). Even when crisis hits and trials arise, we are still responsible for showing up at work, giving it our best, correcting and playing with our children, and putting food on the table. Just because we are going through sickness or have to care for another who is sick does not give us a reason to disobey the scriptures, for commands are always true; we must always seek to be in His will.

Balancing life is difficult and stressful. There's a reason athletes pay lots of money to master balance and control of their bodies. They understand that if they want to take their game to the next level, they have to overcome the imbalances in their physiology and specific skills for their sport. Their ability to balance themselves as they run to the end zone against the sideline could win them the game. Or the ability to do a Kobe fade-away and make the game-winning shot could make or break their career. Let alone the imbalances in one's mechanics and joints that have to be constantly be realigned. There is lots of money going

out to therapists who are experts in “aligning” athletes' bodies and skills. It’s a game of inches, and inches are hard-earned, necessitating proper balance to stay on your feet, stay in bounds, or run within the right lane.

For the layperson who is not trying to score touchdowns on Sundays, our focus is preventing the loss of our balance as we age. Whether it be due to underlying medical conditions or simply loss of age, you will fall. There is a reason that the most common fracture is a hip fracture resulting from senior citizens falling. I work in the medical device industry that focuses on helping provide appropriate device solutions to surgeons to help their patients recover better from such imbalances and falls. I have seen that catastrophe from lack of balance.

We need balance

Humans thrive off balance. Your body has an internal mechanism that allows it to recalibrate when it loses its balance. You learned this in biology class: homeostasis. Homeostasis is when your body is collectively working in harmony. The body comprises around two hundred types of cells, nearly eighty organs, and a dozen or so organ systems. The human body is wonderfully complex. Yet no single cell works alone. It is communicating with other cells. No organ can stand alone and work; it must communicate with other organs. When one system isn’t working, other systems rally around it to help - all by God’s design. The body always wants to restore its equilibrium.

The first part of the word, home, means similar, and the second part, stasis, means stable. It is a system that regulates its internal environment and tends to maintain a steady, constant condition of properties. Homeostasis wants to achieve a stable environment after it’s been put under stress. So, when the body has a malfunction, injury, or sickness, it does what it can to return itself to normalcy or homeostasis. We all experience this when we get the flu. Fever sets in because this is your body hard at work to restore it to a state of equilibrium.

When you break a bone or sprain an ankle, it swells up because your body is attempting to heal itself. Your body cannot function normally until it has returned to homeostasis. Your body cannot do what it's meant to do at its best capabilities until everything is in its rightful place.

Similarly, we must achieve whole-life homeostasis. We need to strive to maintain a certain level of equilibrium across all areas of our life. Restore it to the way it ought to be. It is whole-life homeostasis that allows us to run hard after Christ, fulfill our duty, and pursue what matters most (Hebrews 12:1-2). God made us to uphold balance. Balance was the foundation for a life that flourishes and is the hope of the life to come. We need to have a system of checks and balances that restores equilibrium in our life.

This is the work of a lifetime: achieving the balance that we were originally meant for so that Christ can shine through us as we work out our purposes on this earth for His redemptive plan. The reason for this is that God is a God of balance, made the world in harmony, and one day will restore what was once lost.

God is a God of Balance

God exists in a perfect relationship of three persons yet one God. All three persons are unified and in harmony. There is no hindrance within each other. There is no miscommunication. They are in sync towards their trinitarian glory. They exist in perfect balance. God worked in the first six days of creation, and then he rested (Genesis 1:31). God upholds the entire universe in his hands (Colossians 1:16). God's character is in harmony. His wrath and love, grace and justice, law and grace, all exist within himself in perfect harmony. He is never one without the other yet, and all aim for the same thing.

Christ came in grace and truth (John 1:14). God also upholds and sustains our entire salvation in his hands. He ordains and works out all things to work out for our good and his glory (Romans 8:33). His providence over nature is an excellent expression of his amazing balancing act.

He gives life and takes it away (Psalm 104:29). He sustains all life and is involved in the process by which they are kept alive (Psalm 104:10-14, 27-29; Matthew 6:26). God gives boundaries to nature so that they do not hinder his equilibrium he has in place (Psalm 104:8-9). He removes mountains, shakes the earth, and opens it with earthquakes at his will, at times defying the laws of nature (Job 9:5-6; Psalm 104:32; Psalm 60:2; Numbers 16:30-32). God provides for all humans through the efforts of men. He also controls the laws of nature, the water cycle, and the world's economies through natural events. Not a single atom is out of the will of God or moving towards accomplishing his redemptive purposes.

God created the world in balance

After creating the world in six days, God rested and called creation “very good” (Genesis 1:31). God made the world in perfect homeostasis. There was perfect harmony within the Creator-creation relationship. Creation did not groan but continuously declared the glory of God (Romans 8:26; Psalm 19:1). In other words, everything was in its rightful place doing what God had intended it to do. Today, creation groans and longs for what things once were and looked forward to the coming day where He will restore everything to its original, unhindered purpose of declaring God’s praise.

First, man’s relationship with God was in harmony. God made man in His image to have a unique relationship with Him that nothing else in the created order could do. Man walked with God. God nourished man through His word and God’s provision of food. It was all pleasing to the sight and good for food (Genesis 3:9). God did not withhold from man but made him as his crown jewel (Psalm 8).

Second, man’s relationship with each other was in perfect balance. God had made Adam, and man was not yet in harmony without his suitable helper (Genesis 2:18). It was not good until Eve was made from Adam. Adam and Eve were in perfect balance as they were joined and became one flesh. They were both

naked and were not ashamed (Genesis 2:25). Nothing was hindering their relationship.

The first two chapters of Genesis show us Man's vertical and horizontal relationships in perfect equilibrium. Man's relationship with creation was also in harmony. As image-bearers, man would be fruitful, multiply, and take dominion over creation. Man would cultivate God's perfect creation and maintain its order. Man would work it without hindrances. No thorns. No thistles. Only beauty and pleasant work. It would be diligent work but not burdensome. All this order would create an environment of pure flourishing. Nothing would get in the way of God's designed intent.

Can you imagine your life as if it were back in Eden? Have you had glimpses of those Edenic moments in your life? Where everything is in its place. Even when circumstances around you change, you do not crumble but remain in joy and peace. That was the life God intended to have for us all. That is the way things were ought to be.

Things are not how they ought to be

The moment Adam and Eve sinned, the world spun into a state of perpetual imbalance. We lost peace with God, becoming enemies with him, demonstrated in our hiding and blame-shifting in the garden when called out by God. Our conscience pricked by the sin before a holy God, we trembled in condemnation. We lost harmony in our relationships as Adam and Eve found themselves make and were ashamed (Genesis 3:12). Later, their son would become a murderer (Genesis 4). From that moment, we would no longer find satisfaction in God but the creation (Romans 1:23, 25). In the loss of spiritual harmony, there also came a loss of joy in the commission to glorify God as work became difficult and strenuous (Genesis 3:18). Fulfilling the original commission to be fruitful and multiply would come from the pain and labor. The world now is not what it was meant to be.

We experience the effects of the fall now as we struggle to manage all that God has given us. We become busy with the wrong things. We pursue things that we want instead of what God wants. We choose lesser things, things that seem promising but not best. The reality is that we don't struggle because we have so much to do, and there is so much on our plates. We struggle because of the imbalances that are rooted in our hearts.

St. Augustine says that our hearts are restless until they find satisfaction in Christ. When the heart is not centered on Christ, we become anxious, restless, and hungry for things outside of Christ. No one chooses Christ (Romans 3:10), for we have wicked hearts (Jeremiah 17:9). Naturally, we are imbalanced, hectic, and restless because we value the things of this world more than we treasure God.

Scriptures refer to the heart as the seat of the person's affections and desires. It is where life begins as life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and the heart is the center of blood flow, so it is the fountain of all life as Proverbs 4:23 says to guard your heart for from it flows the springs of life. Life, flourishing, vitality, and abundant living originate from one's center, the heart of man. When the heart is not balanced and centered, we go into cardiac arrest. This spiritual cardiac arrest leaves us eternally damned. No heart surgeon can make it better. Only the Good Physician can.

It is the very heart's desires that God judges. Not just our actions, but the posture of our heart. He judges our lack of Godward worship. He judges our hearts because we make idols. Idolatry, As Paul Tripp, says in his chapter on balance,

"Our hearts struggle to keep things in their right place, so we don't always think, desire, live, relate, plan, and decide with a proper sense of balance. Certain visions, desires, and created things take on greater weight in our hearts than they were meant to take and throw our lives out of balance. What is important to God isn't always important to us. What God knows is

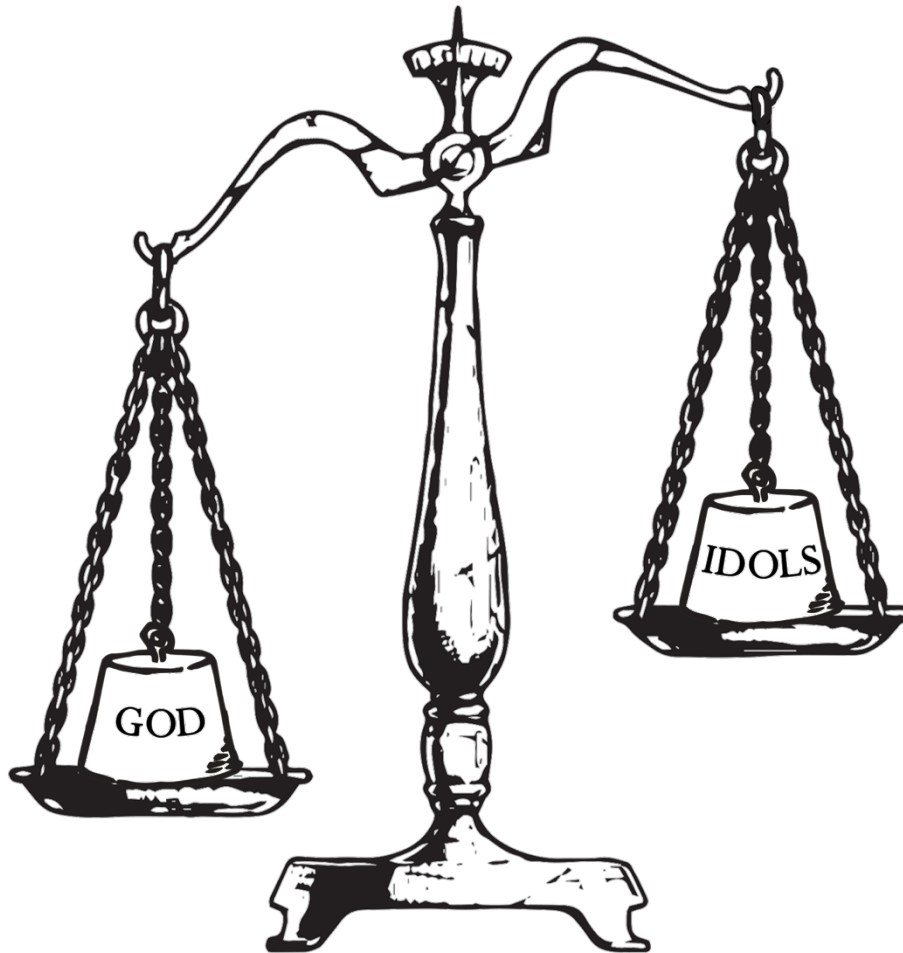
needful for us isn't always needful to us. What God says we should treasure at street level, we don't always treasure. Things gobble up more space in our hearts than they should, and things that should have prominence in our hearts often don't. The brokenness, drama, pain, and sadness in our lives are the result not just of the imbalance around us but also of the imbalance that still exists inside us" (Tripp, p. 88)".

Paul Tripp goes on to link the imbalance of heart to idolatry. The heart births idolatry. As John Calvin says, "the heart is a factory of idols." Men have set up idols in their hearts (Ezekiel 14:3). Idolatry is not just pagan worship but taking good things and making them ultimate things (Tim Keller). Tripp says, "In its most fundamental everyday form, idolatry is when good things are out of balance in our hearts. Idolatry is when things take on a greater weight in our hearts than God does" (Tripp, p. 89).

Romans 1:23, 25: "[They] exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. . . . They exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever!" God created us to give Him glory and worship Him. God is jealous for His glory, and His mission is to glorify Himself. Idolatry, however, exchanges the glory of God for the glory of the created thing. The word glory is *kavod*, which means weight or value. The glory of God is the weight and value of God. The glory of God is the summation of all that he is, his culminated worth and value. When we ascribe Him glory, we recognize and praise him for the ultimate treasure that He is. When we glorify God, we reflect who He is. In Romans 1, in our sin, however, we exchanged this glory for another. Tripp says,

"It is interesting and important to note that the Hebrew word for glory, *kavod*, at its root means or connotes "weight." Think of your heart, as a leader, as an ancient scale with weights on either side. On one side is the Creator weight, and on the other side is the creature weight. In God's design, the Creator weight is meant to be hugely heavier than anything on the creature

side. Sadly, sin throws the scale out of balance, causing created things to have more control over your thoughts, desires, choices, words, and actions than God does. This means that as long as sin lives inside you, you will struggle to keep things in your life and ministry in proper balance” (Tripp, p. 89).



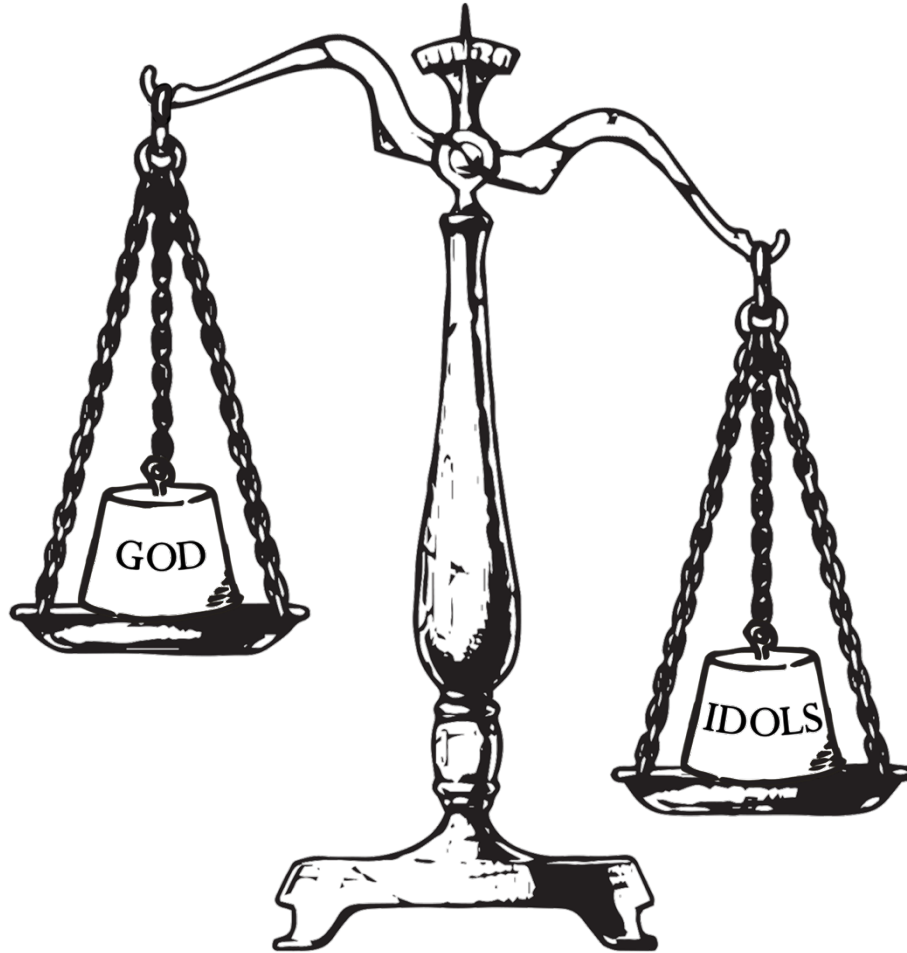
Many good things can become ruling things in our hearts. Loving our family more than Christ can be sinful (Matthew 10:37). Even serving the Lord at times can be ruling our hearts over Christ (Luke 10:41).

This is the very reason that we grow concerned and anxious about lesser things. This why our heart often drifts towards seeking our kingdom than God’s kingdom. This leads to a lack of prioritization. We are prone to be mastered and ruled by other things that aren’t God that lead us to a wasted life. Even ministry itself can be an idol!

Christian, if your life is constantly in a state of imbalance, then there is a heart problem. If your life is in constant imbalance - possibly manifested through stress, anxieties, high blood pressure, and much more physical expressions - then it may be that you are not in spiritual homeostasis. A constant pattern of such a life could only mean that you have not drunk from the fountains of God's grace and been born again and renewed in your heart. You need to come to the great Physician for heart surgery so that your Creator weight exponentially outdoes everything else.

The cure

To recalibrate and restore the imbalanced heart so that the scales of our heart tip exponentially greater for God's glory, then we need a new heart. One that is regenerated so that it could beat for God and His glory (Titus 3:5). It is only then that we can now walk in the new life set before us and walk in our good works (Romans 6:6; Ephesians 2:10; Titus 3:8).



Once our heart is ordered and appropriately weighted, we can be on mission and put the provisions we have for the assignment correctly. Balance is just that, restoring everything to its rightful place, doing what God had intended them to do. We will define it more broadly in the next chapter.

Not only do we need a new heart, but we need to have peace with God. Balance is the act of finding shalom and pursuing shalom. Shalom, our peace, can only be achieved in Jesus Christ (Romans 5:1). From birth, we have enmity with God (Psalm 51:3; Romans 8:7). Peace partially means the absence of hostility. To be without peace is to be hostile towards God. Everything we do is in rebellion. If not our deeds, then our heart. We want to take credit. We want to do things for our glory. We want to do something to make ourselves feel good. It is for me. It is for you. Not for His glory and exaltation. This lack of peace also leads to a restless

and unsatisfied life. We carry our condemning burdens with no hope. There is no true prospering and flourishing without a relationship of peace with God.

This is what Christ came to offer with his death and resurrection: Peace and shalom. He came to give life and give abundantly (John 10:10). It is through peace with God, a clean conscience, assurance of salvation, friendship with God that all restore the scales of our lives so that we can flourish. John 20:19, “Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, ‘Peace be with you.’... So Jesus said to them again, ‘Peace be with you; as the Father sent Me, I also send you.’... Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst and said, ‘Peace be with you.’” (John 20:19,21,26). Three times Jesus greeted His disciples with peace. There is no more enmity with God. We can now value and treasure God and be at peace with him. We can now go through the chaos of this world unfazed. We can face the faults of this world and flourish. We can endure hardship and have joy. We can balance all that we have in this life and have pace while running hard after him.

This was His promise to His Disciples as He was foretelling the future in John 14:27, “Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.” We do not need to be troubled in this hectic life. Your busyness may be due to a fear of men or missing out, and you keep saying yes to everything. You don’t have to fear nor be troubled about not doing it all or trying to please everyone. For Christ leaves us with Peace in our hearts through the Holy Spirit. The cure is finding peace with God through Christ. Christ came to reconcile sinners to himself. He came to give us the abundant life that his servants will be part of, ushering a kingdom that will restore what thoughts were meant to be.

Not only does the Great Physician give us the cure for our heart problem, but he also models for us a life of balance. It was his very food to accomplish the Father’s will (Matthew 4:4), and he did do so perfectly (John 17:6). Meaning he served people, healed just the right amount of people, met his discipleship goals,

finished his carpentry projects, and fulfilled his ministry in the amount of time He was given. He never once was anxious nor stressed but always sought the kingdom of God. He was in harmony, one with the Father. He did the Father's will perfectly. He fulfilled his duty and was eternally fruitful. His life was perfectly integrated. He embodied the biblically balanced and integrated life.

To ever start balancing and fulfilling our biblical priorities, we must become like the One who is perfectly fulfilled and fulfills all these priorities. Before we do anything, we must become like Someone.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Before you begin to work this out practically, you need to understand the idol factory inside you. Be honest with yourself and answer these questions.

>>First, has your heart been regenerated so that you can restore your heart's weight balances and treasure God above all else? In other words, confess your imbalanced, idol worshipping, heart, repent and turn to Christ.

>>Second, what are the things in your life that becoming ruling? That which battles for God's deserved weight on the scales of your heart? Write them down.

To fulfill your duty, the work of a lifetime, you need to guard your heart against the things that will rob God of His deserved glory. Before we do any sort of balancing, we must behold the One who hung on the cross – with our eternity in the balance – and become like the One who accomplished redemption and offers a life of abundant joy.

CHAPTER 2

HOW THINGS OUGHT TO BE

As we saw from the previous chapter, grace changes everything. When the grace of our Lord appeared, it changed our lives and our future (Titus 2:11). The long-awaited Messiah had shown up not to conquer the world immediately but to conquer hearts. His grace cures the imbalanced heart and restores peace that leads to abundant living. His grace transforms our hearts so that we no longer serve other gods but can worship the one and true God. Without Christ, life under the sun is vanity and fleeting. Life in and under the Son reorients our heart's affections so we can treasure God and reorient our life under Him.

Grace reorients the weight scales of our heart and recenters our pendulum toward Christ so that now we could achieve balance through our lives and towards our spheres of influence. We must start at the heart because as the heart goes, so does everything else. The heart must change if we want our actions to matter, and if we want the wisdom to know, what God says must be done and matters most. Not only to be able to fulfill our duty faithfully but gladly.

Moreover, we don't need to crumble under our difficult circumstances, and our lives don't need to go into disarray because Christ's yoke is easy, and his burden is light. Christ has given us his divine power so that we can live life the way he meant it to be (2 Peter 1:3). Christ, who holds the entire world in the balance every moment of every day, also lives through those who have been born again and helps them keep their lives in balance.

We can live the way things ought to be and accomplish what matters most. We can now desire and find delight in the duty we are assigned to. What must be done becomes our greatest desire. For the Bible exhorts us to fulfill many responsibilities that require our time, energy, efforts, pursuits: loving the Lord with all our being, loving our neighbor, working heartily unto him, to love and shepherd our wives, to raise children in the way of the Lord, to pray without

ceasing, meditate day and night on the Word, participate in corporate worship, gather for fellowship and breaking of bread, to edify the saints according to your gifts, bear witness to the gospel with unbelievers in all areas of your life, carefully study the Word, conduct small groups, and pursue one-on-one discipleship, counsel, train up others, and much more.

The scriptures call us to balance our labors with active dependent rest. Rest is not to be wasted either. Rest is also intentional. When God rested, he did not stop holding all things together. Our rest is actively pursuing a reorientation of our heart. It is a checkpoint to ensure that we treasure God and are seeking dependence on him.

Add to all of this the urgency of duties that come with peculiar circumstances: falling ill, a family member falling critically ill, the birth of a child, moving, coming to the aid of a marriage that is hanging on its threads, last-minute business meetings, work travels, and trials and sufferings.

All these things come under God's providential arrangement within our 24 hour period. Under God's sovereign providence, he has assigned to you your capacity, limitations, family situation, geography, and the rest. It is He who determines your lot in life. It is he who assigns you to your post and consequential duties. It is our job to do what must be done. We have to juggle all these things. We have to ensure we don't swing to the extremes of the pendulum and commit idolatry. We must keep God and His glory central to all we do so that we can remain faithful and fruitful.

But as Christians, we get nervous around the word "balance." It carries a negative connotation. It has a negative connotation about someone not interested in radical holiness and Christianity. Regarding the word balance, JI Packer says it is a "horrible, self-conscious word" (Packer, 1993).

The work-life balance movement is part of this erroneous view of balance. As an avid reader of business and marketing blogs and books, work-life balance is a trendy topic in the blogosphere. This reveals that it is human nature to desire

balance. There is something in us that is groaning towards a world that ought to be lived. The conscience that God has placed in us with his moral code causes believers and non-believers to be convicted when they fail to prioritize their life and fail to give attention to the people or things in our life that are more important.

There are some serious problems with the work-life balance movement as it is not a biblical approach to life. The reason for the cries to restore work-life balance is said well by Michael Hyatt, "Modern technology has made overwork the norm. Research by the Korea Labor Institute found smart devices add more than eleven hours to the workweek, especially after business hours. Another study of executives, managers, and professionals found smartphones stretch the workweek to more than seventy hours for most" (Hyatt & Miller, p. 31).

This secular movement to restore work-life balance has created some misconceptions about what biblical is. It has distorted our view of balance. When you fail to define and achieve balance God's way, it is a horrible, self-conscious word. Here are the misconceptions that balance carries that cause Christians to cringe:

>> **Balance is self-centered.** In this distorted view of balance, when someone is overloaded with work or nonessentials, they demand the need for rest at the expense of what must be done. While rejuvenation is critical, rest is for a greater purpose. Those who balance in this way swing towards idolatry or idleness. This kind of balance sees times as "my time" rather than an opportunity to make the most of the opportunity and honor the Lord (Ephesians 5:16). Balance is about keeping your life in order and in place to love people better and so that you can be free to live out the duty – without hindrance - you have been called to fulfill.

>> **Balance is narrow.** This one is obvious with the notion of work-life balance. They regard balance as if work is our only duty in life. As a comprehensive and

integrated whole, our life consists of various domains we are responsible for. Yes, we are built for a lifetime of work, but not just work in our career. Life is about ministry. Life is about serving your family, neighbors, and saints. Life is much more than just work and life. Granted, we spend most of our time at work, so there is a reason here, but it carries a preconceived notion that only our careers matter most. All vocations of life require work. The Christian life is a lifetime of work.

>>**Balance to escape.** Like the first point, this carries more of a desire to escape God's will for your life. There is unhappiness with God's will in your current season, so the overwhelm is not from an overload of work but an overload of angst and stress from not being able to do the things you are "truly passionate about." This points to the emphasis that work is terrible, and the 9-5 must be escaped. This view of balance sees work as the problem, and you as needed to be served. Work is not the problem. You and your sin are the problems. You need to escape the grips of sin and Satan and move towards Christ-likeness in all that you do. You cannot escape what God has providentially ordained for you to do. You have to carry heavy things and do hard things, and work is one of them. You are escaping hard things and escaping what must be done. We do not get to reengineer our life and design our own life the way we want it.

>>**Balance is a mere juggling act.** Balance is often seen as a defensive approach to life. You are just trying not to drop the ball or the plates you are carrying. Just don't let any fall. This view sees all areas of life in competition with one another, and if stuff hits the fan, then you're going to let the least important one fall. This view of balance negates the drive to flourish and thrive. Instead, you are just trying to survive. Proper balance achieves so much more. True balance helps you succeed and prosper where you are.

>>**Balance is the pursuit of the bare minimum.** There is a tone with balance that comes with it, a pursuit of less. To balance so that we have less on our plates. Look, some of us should have less. But most likely, most of us should have more. Too many men are carrying too little. They are pawning off their responsibilities to their wives or others. Men, we must gird up our loins and carry heavy loads. That is what you are built for. You are the stronger vessel. But unbiblical balance approach seeks comfort and to be mediocre. Christ calls us to greatness by aggressively serving others, not by doing less.

>>**Balance is compartmentalization.** Balance carries with it the idea that we should even out our hours spent. That there should be enough hours and maybe equal hours given to all areas of our life. As if we could piece up our life in a perfect pie sliced into fives. But you are to be the same person at home that you are work and church. Your entire life is to be integrated and aimed towards Christ and His kingdom.

Balance is much more than all those things. Balance does not need to be a terrible self-serving word. It can be a beautiful thing when done God's way for God's purposes.

What is balance?

Balance is not to be self-centered but an attempt to bring life to attend to the needs of others. Balance seeks to bring life and work in equilibrium and bring all areas and domains in order. Balance is not about escaping God's design but ensuring things are doing what God had meant them to do. Balance is not a defensive approach to life but an aggressive, diligent pursuit to maximize life for the glory of God. Balance is not the pursuit of the bare minimum but a desire to be excellent in every area of life. Balance is about integrating life rather than compartmentalizing your life so that you can pursue those mentioned above.

We pursue balance so that we can thrive as we seek to be faithful and fulfill our duty in life. Life is not meant to live according to the motto of "just surviving." We want to live abundantly. Whether in want or is supplied, we want to experience God's love and peace (Philippians 4:12-13). We thrive and prosper if we can achieve what must be done in our life according to our general callings as Christian and specific callings. When our heart is balanced, we want to do what God has set out for us and walk in his paths.

It is challenging to define biblical balance in just one sentence as it is a multi-faceted word. Like the Word Trinity not being found in the scripture but used to express a biblical truth, we used balance to describe a work of a lifetime laid out in scripture. While this, I am sure, is not exhaustive, I want to present five facets of balance: a biblically balanced life is a life that pursues shalom, integration, maximizing, centeredness, and Godward living.

Shalom

Balance seeks shalom. The Bible is about human flourishing, and "the Bible's vision of human flourishing is God-centered" (Perman, p. 35). In Paul Tripp's chapter on balance, he says balance is "everything in its right place doing what it was meant to do." In other words, balance pursues purpose-driven order. Can you imagine such a world where life is experiencing the way it was meant to be? Paul Tripp continues on this thought,

"We cannot even picture such a world, where everything is predictable, and there is nothing to worry about, where life is easier to live, decisions are easier to make, and relationships are easier to maintain and enjoy. That's how it was meant to be by God's design—creation in its proper place doing what it was meant to do, peace reigning from the earth's deepest valleys up to the highest heavens. No brokenness, no dysfunction, and no impending problem around the corner—everything, everywhere and in every place, in balance" (Tripp, p. 87).

That is how things ought to be. We have seen already how and why everything is not in its rightful place doing what it was meant to do: because man's heart is imbalanced and outweighs other things as more valuable than God.

The Word describes this life of balance as shalom. It feels corny and strange even to write shalom because it also carries preconceived notions and overly zealous connotations. But the Word is biblical and has many definitions.

Shalom is the Hebrew word for peace, and it is more than just the absence of hostility, but the aggressive pursuit of reconciling all things under the Lordship of Christ. Often, shalom is taken out of context to describe the cultural impact believers ought to have on a community. This is true; we should seek the welfare of a city; shalom is much more than this. Shalom is about being well ordered and everything being well.

Aristotle defines it as "the innate potential of each individual to live. Life of enduring happenings, penetrating wisdom, optimal wellbeing, and authentic love and compassion" (Aristotle, 2011). If we start with the end in mind, we get a glimpse of what shalom is. Shalom is what awaits every believer: the new heavens and the new earth where sin and darkness will no longer reign, but Christ and God's glory will be at the center and light the world forever. No more thorns and thistles in our work and worship. There will be no more childbearing, but all Christ children will no longer bear any burdens, for there will be no burdens to care. Everything will be made new and be in its rightful place. Peace and joy will be experienced to their maximum.

To pursue Shalom is to have our heart in the right place, having peace with God, and diligently pursuing this peace (2 Peter 3:10). When our heart is in the rightful place, and God is in His proper place in our heart - fully treasured - then we seek to accomplish what matters most and what must be done according to His will. Not only do we seek it, but we find joy in completing our duty. We do not fret or worry but trust and seek His will.

This particular way of living, a life of shalom, results in flourishing and thriving. Psalm 1 shows us a picture of a man who treasures God's Word and God's way of life, and his life results in prosperity. Not prosperity like we think of it in earthly terms, but one that endures and stands firm during trialing times. One that enjoys and has peace.

Shalom is what it means to live the abundant life Christ came to give us (John 10:10). The abundant life is about experiencing all of heaven's riches now and throughout eternity (Ephesians 1:3-11). Working towards balance is working towards shalom. Harmony, therefore, is bringing everything to its rightful place to do what God intended it to do.

But, we must bring all things to their rightful place to work together for one common goal.

Integration

Biblical balance means an integrated life. Biblical balance rejects the notion that life is to be compartmentalized. All our assignments of our life should not compete with one another. Also, not everything requires equal time, energy, and investment. God has given us the first things we must pursue above other things. Scripture constantly talks about the better things and call to choose what is profitable (1 Corinthians 6:12).

We don't ever stop being a husband. You don't get away with your wife and stop being a father. One must leave and cleave with their parents once married, but they are still sons and brothers and serve your extended families. We don't ever stop being churchmen. If you are an elder at a church, you are an elder until the Lord calls you to be done. It means you remain above reproach, not just on Sunday mornings but at home and work.

Paul calls Timothy and preachers and ministers alike to be ready in season and out of season (2 Timothy 4:2). They never stop being a pastor or preacher. They are always prepared. Christian, you never stop being a Christian. You are

always to be ready to give a reason for your faith (1 Peter 3:5). Christ calls us to make disciples as we go about in life. Therefore, no matter what we are doing or wherever we may be off to, we are to make disciples of all people. All phases and areas of our life are to be devoted and given unto the Lord. They are to be integrated.

We know that our marital problems can affect our work lives. Your ministry burdens can make you weary at home. A church or family crisis will cause you to pause other projects. All this can keep you from maintaining your yard or keep up with oil changes. All our assignments, duties, and responsibilities in life have a cause and effect in other areas. We are intricate and complex beings.

In other words, integrating means that you are assimilating all your spheres of influence, domains of life towards one common goal. In other words, you are aiming for a consistent life. You are the same person no matter where you are and who you're with. An integrated life means that you are not fragmented. The Lord was wise to make that a qualification of elders. His home life must be in order before he can lead the church. (1 Timothy 3:7).

We must look at our life as a comprehensive unit rather than fragmented or segmented pieces, divided all trying to do different things. We are to seek God's kingdom in all areas of life. We aim to make Christ Lord over all areas as he is Lord over all. Not just within our church responsibilities.

The opposite of integrating is dis-integrate which means to unravel and come apart at the seams. Such a life falls apart when it is under pressure. Consider a not-so-well-seamed baseball hit by Mike Trout; it will deflate and fall apart and get nowhere. There is no power or effect in such a life. It's a dud.

Let us consider the word integration, which is closely related to integrity. A person of integrity suggests a person whose life is whole or wholesome. This person has got it all together. A biblical approach to balance means you are living

a life of integrity. The person who has integrity will pursue a balanced life. He is consistent, faithful, and fulfilling his duty before the Lord no matter what. This one comprehensive aim is to do all things for the glory of God so that we can make the most of the one life we got.

Maximizing

Balance is about striving towards correctly placing all things or unifying all those things towards one common goal and making the most of all those things.

The faithful life seeks to maximize life. C.T. Studd famously says, "only one life twill soon be past." Life is more than just making sure everyone or all things get equal attention. That is ludicrous. There will never be a life where my friends get more of me than my wife. Or my co-workers more from me than my children. Life is not so cookie-cutter. Seasons change—life changes. Pregnancies happen, deaths stack up, pandemics occur, and much more.

A balanced life is more than just balancing out your checkbook and more than just accounting for all your dollars. It is more like budgeting and investing, where you budget every dollar and give every dollar a place and a task. You invest it so that it works for you and compounds over time. That's a wise use of money. You don't want to bury it in the ground like the wicked and foolish servant (Matthew 25:30).

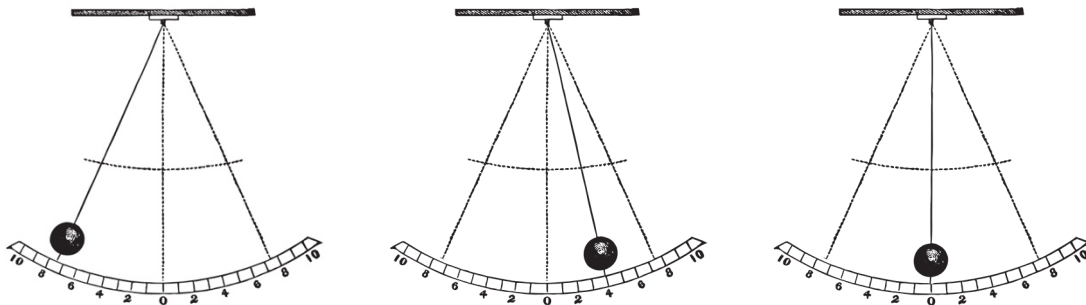
So it is with life. Like Bill Belichick, the greatest coach of all time and coach of the New England Patriots, who has won super bowls with less than stellar talent, attributes his success to how he gets the most out of his players. You must draw out the most of your life. This is more than just a YOLO mindset. It is a YOLF mindset. You only live forever. What you do now counts for eternity. We cannot take a passive back seat approach to our life. We must get on the wheel and determine who we will impact and with what tasks we will place our energy. How are we going to max out our capacity? Enough of the pursuit of doing less.

Most men do not necessarily need to do more; they need to do better where they are.

A balanced life seeks to max out our potential. We want to max out on the scales that weigh out God's worth and value. That is the worthy life, the one that lives all areas to their utmost potential for the glory of God.

Centeredness

Balancing life doesn't have to be only thought of as scales but also a pendulum. We either swing towards idleness or idolatry. We swing from work to ministry. Ministry to family. Family to work. Like the figures below, the less mature we are, the broader and greater the swings are. The more we mature, the more narrow and subtle the swings become. In other words, we can balance better as we grow.



Ultimately, we want to be centered on the swing. As Matt Perman notes in his book on getting unstuck, "As my pastor once said, 'Christ doesn't just want to be another app on your operating system; he is the new operating system altogether.' Christ should not be just one component among many in our lives. He ought to be the center which everything else flows because he is Lord of all" (Perman, pp. 36-37).

The Christ-centered life is the life that seeks to do all that they can for Him and in His power as he is the source and focus and sustainment of such a life. Being centered allows us to focus on what matters most: the glory of God and our pursuit of him, which then brings everything into its rightful place doing what it was meant to do - just the way things ought to be.

Godward

Albert Einstein famously says, "Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving." In other words, "just keep swimming." The Christian life is not just one of solemn static meditation. We don't sit all day and ho and hum. Our life is one of progressive motion. The Christian life is like a race (1 Corinthians 9:24; Hebrews 12:1). We are to discipline ourselves in godliness (1 Timothy 4:8) and work out our salvation in fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12). In other words, our life is always to be moving towards a goal (Philippians 3:12). We have one life and one aim.

This is what the Godward life is all about. It is a life in motion towards Christ-likeness. Before we can do anything for Christ and what must be done for Christ, we must behold God and become like Christ. That is Godward: forward direction towards God. The Godward life seeks never to stop running towards Christ and reaching our full potential to become like Christ and experience the life he calls us to live.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Take the time to evaluate how your view and practice of balance compares with our biblically defined approach.

>>First, are you experiencing abundant living, or are you just trying to survive? If so, describe why it's either abundant or survival mode.

>>Second, list out the things, areas, people in your life that are not in order in their proper place, integrated towards a common goal, not being maxed out, or keeping you from growing towards Christ-likeness.

CHAPTER 3

THE CALL TO STEWARDSHIP

To get our life in order, fulfill our duty, and do what matters most, we must first understand our identity and function - function precedes duty. The reason we have responsibilities to meet is that we are stewards of the Lord's kingdom. While we relationally are positioned as sons and friends of God, we function as His stewards. We need to balance life and ministry because we are stewards who have been assigned time, treasure, talents, truth, and tribes that we are responsible for. How we manage them and leverage them for His goals and glory will determine how we spend the rest of eternity. Those who prove faithful please the Lord and validate their eternal position.

What is Stewardship?

Stewardship comes from the Word *oikonomia*, which is made up of two parts: *Oikos* and *nomos*. *Oikos* is the Word for "house" or "household" and *nomos* for "law." So together, these words mean house law or the economy of the household of God. A steward rules the household of another. He has been entrusted with his master's possessions and people. Stewardship is the management of all God has placed in your care for the fulfillment of his providential plan of redemption. It is the arenas of life where you perform your whole-life service and worship of God.

The understanding of stewardship is rooted in creation and our calling as image-bearers. Genesis 1:26, 28, "Then God said, 'Let Us make man in our image, according to Our likeness...Be fruitful and multiply, and field the earth, and subdue it, and rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth.'" The call of God to follow him is thus a call to bear his image and imitate Christ as we serve and rule according to all that he

has given to us that we may prove faithful and provide a joyful and rewarding accounting of all our activity.

Understanding your function as a steward is key to balancing life and ministry. We pursue what must be done instead of what we want because we are stewards. Ultimately, stewards find delight in getting those things done, and they become the things we want to do because we desire to please our Master. To understand the duties we must fulfill, we must understand a few things from a critical parable on stewardship.

Parable of the Talents

In speaking to His disciples on the mount of olives during Olivet discourse, He describes what the kingdom of God is like and what its true citizens do. "Then the kingdom of heaven may be compared to... "For it is just like a man about to go on a journey" (Matthew 25:1, 14). The first half of this chapter is on the ten virgins, which describes the internal readiness of kingdom citizens, and the second half, our focus, is on external readiness. One is on the spiritual readiness and the other on the activities of those spiritually positioned for heaven.

To balance life and ministry, you must first identify the man who has left on a journey in this passage. Luke 19:12 describes this man as a nobleman that is going away to receive a kingdom and later return at an unexpected time. We know from Daniel 7:13-14 and this passage that this man is our Lord Jesus Christ, the one whose kingdom will rule supreme. For all authority and rule has been given to him after his resurrection (Hebrews 2:8).

We know for sure that Christ is returning, but we don't know when. It could happen at any moment, in the twinkling of an eye. This is the essence of stewardship that we are expected to fulfill our duty every moment of every day, expecting him to return at any moment. Jonathan Edwards' 19th Resolution says, "Resolved, never to do anything, which I should be afraid to do if I expected it

would not be above an hour before I should hear the last trump." Are you resolved and ready to receive your Lord?

Second, you must recognize your function. This man calls his servants slaves. While stewards were those who got to rule and take dominion in place of their master, at the very core of our function is slavehood. A steward had the same level of authority while their master was gone as we saw in Joseph's time in Potiphar's estate. You are responsible for leveraging the resources in the best interests of the master. But at the end of the day, you are still a slave.

A slave belonged and was possessed by the master. God owns it all, and He owns you. He created all things, holds all things, and owns all things. All you have in your gifts, abilities, wife, children, money, home, and resources are all given to you by God. Like Abraham Kuyper says, "there is no square inch that does not shout, mine!" Everything comes from God and will go back to God with an accounting (1 Corinthians 4:7).

In ancient times, slaves were like tools. They didn't even own themselves and were under the complete authority of a master. Our function as a slave is to allow our will to be swallowed up by the will of their Master. The apostles and scripture writers referred to themselves as slaves (James 1:1, Romans 1:1, 2 Peter 1:1, Jude 1; Revelation 1:1). We have always been slaves. Either we were slaves of sin (Romans 6:7), or once saved, we become slaves of Christ and righteousness (1 Corinthians 7:22; Romans 6:8). In Christ, we belong to him because we have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20). This is a remarkable passage:

"And there will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His slaves will serve Him; and they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads." Revelation 22:3-4

In heaven, we are still considered a slave and will serve him forever and ever. But only those who have done the Word of God and obeyed him will serve him forever (Matthew 7:21-23). Stewards must do what is required by the Lord.

Now that you recognize your identity and function, you must recognize the duty of a steward. Verses 14-15 says, "handed over his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey."

The ESV translates "gave" as entrusted. To entrust is to have a personal transfer something valuable over. What he gives over are talents which are weights of measures. In other words, he entrusts valuable stuff to his slaves. What I love about this passage is also the fact that he assigns according to their ability. The master's assignment is all according to His sovereignty. This also signifies that our master knows us. He knows his slaves because "Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I have appointed you a prophet to the nations" (Jeremiah 1:5). God forms us and makes us, and appoints us our role in life. The Lord is intimately acquainted with us. He knows your strengths and weaknesses; He knows your desires and longings. As we see it here, the steward's job is to maximize the talents according to what he has been given within the unknown time frame that he has been given. As a steward called by God, you have been given what you have because that is how God made, knows you best, and wants you to max out. What does he give us? He offers proportional benefits of talents or how I like to refer them in five "T's": Time, Talents, treasure, truth, and tribe.

>>**Time.** The stewardship of time is foundational to all other stewardships. You don't steward your time well you don't have time to do anything else well. This is the cornerstone piece to all other T's. Time is like no other resource we have been given. You can lose money and work harder to regain it. You can lose a home only to build another one. You can lose an acquaintance only to find a new friend. But

time lost can never be regained. That is why Paul tells the Ephesian church to redeem the time or make the most of the opportunity (Ephesians 5:16).

In greek, there are multiple words for time. The two more frequent uses are chronos or kairos. Chronos refers to the time measured in hours, minutes, and seconds. Ephesians 5:16 uses kairos, which is a fixed season or epoch. God has set boundaries to our lives, and our opportunity for service and worship exists only within those boundaries.

The word Kairos refers to the ancient Greek God of opportunity. He was positioned in many great cities, and this was a statue of a man with wings on his feet, a large lock of hair on the front of his head, and no hair at all on the back. Beneath was the description: "Who made thee? Lysippus made me. What is thy name? My name is Opportunity. Why has thou wings on thy feet? That I may fly away swiftly. Why has thou a great forelock? That men may seize me when I come. Why art thou bald in back? That when I am gone by, none can lay hold of me." The wise steward is the one that makes the most of the opportunity to make much of Christ and meet the needs of others.

>>**Talents.** The Lord has given us natural assets. You have abilities, skills, strengths that have been nurtured and placed within you. You may be good at working on cars, playing musical instruments, athletics, math, writing, woodworking, and the list goes on. Your strengths may include that you are a visionary, humble, witty, intelligent, etc.

Not only do you have assets, but if you have been called to Christ to follow him, you have also been endowed with the stewardship of spiritual, supernatural assets. 1 Peter 4:10, "As each one has received a gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God—whoever speaks, as one speaking the oracles of God; whoever serves, as one serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and might forever and ever. Amen." These gifts you have

been given so that you can leverage them to build up the church. Are you utilizing your talents?

>>**Treasure.** Your treasures are all the money, possessions, and resources given to you by God. Everything you have been given in monetary value or physical assets like your home, car, property, and body. This is one of the critical components for stewardship, for where your money is there, your heart is also. If you want to conduct a quick survey of your heart on whether or not you are imbalanced, then see where you are spending your money.

>>**Truth.** "Let a man consider us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found faithful" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2). The context here is Paul calling ministers of God as those entrusted to guard the truth and faithfully dispense what was once hidden and make it known; we all have a responsibility to build up others with the Word of God. To make disciples is to teach them all that Christ had commanded. We have stewardship over whom we share the truth with. The stewardship here entails our personal growth of the whole counsel of God and is seeking to disciple mature saints (Colossians 1:28).

>>**Tribe.** Who is part of the tribe of people that God has assigned to your assignment? Who is that you are to shepherd, protect, and serve within your post in life? The other three T's are the provisions for the mission, the truth is the power and message of the mission, but people are the objective of our mission. The steward in ancient times was given not only possessions of the master but also the people in the household. Potiphar did not withhold anything nor anyone except for his wife. The steward is a manager of the estate and the people who work on the estate. So it is with the faithful steward. He has people he's responsible for and has to give an account for. While we are not responsible for

saving people, we are responsible for planting seeds and watering. We are not responsible for saving our children, but we must instruct them and train them in the ways of the Lord. We will discuss more of this topic in the next chapter.

A call to faithful obedience

The steward is both ruler and servant. He seeks to please his master (Colossians 3:18). This was even true for kings in Israel. Before Israel had a King, the Lord knew their hearts would desire one just as the other nations, so he set it in the law what a King should conduct himself. He should not multiply horses, wives, nor money (Deuteronomy 17:16-17), but he should do one thing:

"He shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests. It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes, that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel" (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

He should be a man of the Word, hiding the Word in his heart so that he would obey the true King's orders. He is to rule according to the law of God, not according to his own way. Even more so with the servant, he is to obey the master's orders (Colossians 3:22).

There is a great reward to reap proportional to what we have sown. The faithful steward will enter into the master's joy (Matthew 25:21,23). Men who are hard at work both in life and ministry may seek to fulfill our duty by balancing our lives and ensuring that we are doing what is required of us to have joy in this life now and forever.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Now the question remains, how do we go about stewarding our time, talents, treasures, truth, and tribe properly? God does not expect nor require you to do everything. There are a few clear priorities and projects derived from God-assigned roles that should occupy most of your time during any given week.

There are thousands of things on the to-do list that are secondary that tempt us to devote a disproportionate amount of time, energy to complete it. If we are lazy, we will neglect the important for the urgent. Assess your use of time, treasures, talents, the truth, and your tribe.

>> Conduct a time budget. Spend the next week jotting down how you are spending your time.

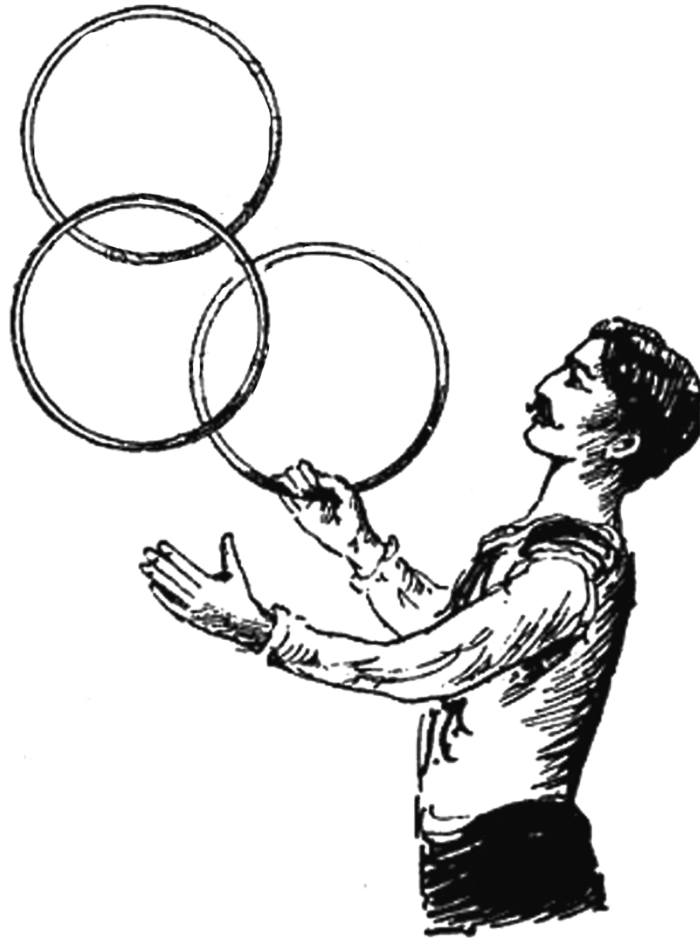
>> Take inventory of all your natural and spiritual talents. What are your strengths and weaknesses? What are you passionate about? What skills do you possess? Receive affirmation from those who know you best.

>> Analyze your budget. Are you obeying God with your money? How can you better utilize your resources for the glory of God? What are you not entrusting to the Lord and not using for His purposes?

>> Examine yourself against God's word. What truth of God's Word are you focusing on? Where are you weak on? What truth does the tribe of people around you need to hear?

>> Record all the people that you think you are responsible for. Who do you need to surprise and serve?

PART 2: PUTTING INTO PRACTICE



CHAPTER 4

THE ONE THING

Now that we have defined biblical balance and how to restore the imbalance in our heart so that we can be faithful in fulfilling our duty, the question remains: how do we prioritize and balance everything that we have going on? And how do we not only get it done but also make sure we maximize what we do, do it excellently, and for His glory so that we can ensure we reap the eternal reward when we go give an account of what we have done.

With so many options to choose from on any given day and moment, we must ensure we do not grow concerned about lesser things and neglect what matters most. We must guard ourselves against seeking our kingdom instead of Christ's kingdom.

The answer is not to do more of the right things or necessarily cut out more of our life. The answer is not that we have to budge our time or be more effective with our time. The answer is to narrow down all the things we have to do to just one thing.

For you to balance life and ministry, there must be one all-consuming possession. We must be about one thing. There is one duty that overarches all responsibilities. One task that is preeminent above the rest drives every other job—one that keeps our heart in the right place and our actions toward what must be done. One thing would not only make our life more straightforward, but it would help us thrive.

In their national bestseller, *The One Thing*, the authors ask the question, "How do some people get so much more done than others?" Go small and focused is what they say. Going small means "ignoring all the things you could do and doing what you should... it's realizing that extraordinary results are directly determined by how narrow you can make your focus. The way to get the most out of your work and life is to go as small as possible" (Keller & Papasan, p. 31)

This is the key to restoring things the way they ought to be so that we can do what matters most. We don't want to survive; we should want to thrive. The goal is not that we necessarily do more - even though some men should take on more - but that we are excellent with what we are doing and maximize all that we do. But with everything on our plates, we need to focus and prioritize. Seth Godin says, "decide what really matters and do it," and Nike says, "just do it." So what is the one thing that matters most? The one thing we must do no matter what task or person we are with? God tells us in scripture:

God's Beauty

Psalm 27:4, "One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek: That I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, To behold the beauty of the LORD And to meditate in His temple."

Out of all the things, there was one unitary, the single-minded resolve of King David. David had one thing: the beauty and glory of God. Sam Storms says, "David's identity wasn't wrapped up in his calling as King. He didn't wake up each day with a political agenda on his mind or a scheme for expanding the boundaries of his empire. David thought of one thing: to find a way to break free of routine entanglements that he might dwell in the presence of God; to avoid trivial activities that might divert his eyes from beholding God; to clear his mind of extraneous details that he might meditate upon the beauty and splendor of God; to set aside less important tasks that he might bask in the invigorating light and glory of everything that makes God an object of our affection and delight and adoration" (Storms, pp. 47-48).

God's Kingdom

Matthew 6:33, seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. The one thing principle is not that we only ever do that one thing, but that the one thing, the kingdom of God and God's glory, remains our preeminent focus. That no

matter what we are doing, we aim for the coming and fulfillment of the kingdom of Christ.

Love God

After Solomon had experimented with all pleasures and passions in life, he summarizes the key to living in Ecclesiastes 12:13, The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil.” The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to proclaim the vanity and futility of life without God. A life dedicated to pleasing self. A life that defines balance in its own way. Solomon summarizes life with one thing: fear God (know God for who he is) and obey him. It’s that simple.

That leads us to a significant point about the one thing. The summary of the law that we must obey is in a love for God and love for people. Exodus 20:3, “you shall not have any other gods besides me.”

Here God defines loving Him as a singular and supreme love. There is nothing else you should love. Period. This builds our case in chapter one. If you want to have a balanced heart that seeks to accomplish what must be done and what matters most, we first must have nothing else competing for our affections. The truth is nothing compares to the value of God. There is none greater.

Matthew 22:37, “And he said to him, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.’” Matthew emphasizes that our love is to be comprehensive and all-encompassing. Every fiber of your being, every atom circulating in your world, must be directed towards the Lord. To keep the commandment, we must love God solely and supremely. We love God by loving people. We love people by obeying the one task we must be committed to.

One Task

When the Lord returned in his resurrected body, he commanded his disciples one task before ascending: “Go, therefore, and make disciples...” (Matthew 28:19). As they go about life, they are commanded with one overarching duty: make disciples. In worship and love for God, we seek to make God worshippers. That is our response. This is foundational to what we’ve been talking about. If you want to balance life and ministry, you have to be about loving God and loving others, as is demonstrated with the task of helping them know Jesus or become more like him.

So the one thing is to behold God so that we may become like Him. We become like him so that we may be able to better treasure and love him. We love him by obeying his command to love people and making disciples out of those we come in contact with. One thing remains constant: we are disciples of Christ, discipling others to be like Christ.

Do you understand now? The Bible is clear that we have one primary assignment and that everything else is subordinate. One overarching duty. If we do well, everything else will be provided for (Matthew 6:33). Everything else is to be organized under that and defines all secondary “whatever you do’s” (Colossians 3:23; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

The one thing exemplified

Paul was obsessed with one thing. While he taught the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:24), there was one thing that reigned overall: Christ Crucified (1 Corinthians 2:2) and the gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3). He had one goal for his people: Maturity in Christ (Colossians 1:27-28). He wanted to know Christ (Philippians 3:8) and wanted to do one thing: “but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and striving towards what lies ahead, I press toward the goal of the upward prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Philippians 3:13-14). And

of course, “whether you eat or drink, do all for the glory of God” (1 Corinthians 10:31). But what does this One thing look like practically?

Our ultimate purpose and duty in life is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever. God created you to be an image-bearer, one that reflects all that God is. You are to be a tangible representation of the living God. How do we do this in everyday life? In the regular, ordinary duties of our day?

As we just saw, to glorify God is to love and obey him. We show we love God by keeping His commandments (John 15:10). Fulfilling this completes our joy (John 15:11). And the command we are to keep? That which reflects how to glorify God and love him? By loving one another (John 15:12). That is why Jesus glorified God perfectly. He laid down his life for his friends and enemies - there is no greater love than this (John 15:13).

Love for people should never surpass a love for God - this is idolatry, but a love for God is never without a passion for people. And in Philippians 1:19-26, Paul demonstrates a life aimed towards glorifying God by loving Him and loving people:

“According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live in on the flesh that will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know what I will choose. But I am hard-pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better, yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. And convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith....”

Paul writes to the Philippian church with an earnest expectation and hope that he would not only see them once more - for this imprisonment would not be his final one - but that no matter what stage in life he’s in, dead or alive, he will exalt

Christ in this body. At this moment of the stroke of a pen, Paul is ready as he always has been to present himself as a living sacrifice, die to self, and exalt Christ.

His reasoning behind such a commitment to live to Christ by death or life? “To live Christ, to die again.” That’s it. No verb, “is,” in Greek. Just the phrase “to live.” There is only one kind of Christian living, and that is Christ. While we live, life is about serving him. Thus, his only hope, purpose, and focus were Christ. Like my pastor, Chris Mueller, often says, “our purpose is a person.” And that person is Christ.

We have a comprehensive calling to make much of Jesus because we have been saved by Jesus (2 Thessalonians 2:14), we are given to Jesus (John 17:6), and we are called to live for Jesus (Ephesians 2:10). This Person “must be our primary, overarching, undergirding assignment. It must happen before every other assignment, supersede every other assignment, and will last long after every other assignment is completed” (Gospel at work pg. 90).

This was manifested in his desire to depart and be with Christ. To Paul, death was a blessing. It was a departure from this heavy-laden life to at home resting with Christ. It was very much better to depart (v. 23). Yet, to remain only meant one thing: ministry.

That is why the one thing in this life could be summarized as pursuing a lifestyle of ministry. For Paul, he defined making much of Christ through ministry. To behold Christ in his glory, and to love God above all things, was shown through a love for others. A desire to see them come to saving faith in Christ or become more like him. That is why life is ministry.

John Piper says, “fulfilling your ministry is more important than staying alive. This conviction is what makes the lives of radically devoted people so inspiring to watch. Most of them speak the way Paul did about his ministry (acts 20:24). Doing the ministry that God gives us to do is more important than life”

(Piper, Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God, p. 287).
Fulfilling the ministry Paul was responsible for was his one thing.

What is ministry?

Paul says that whether we live or die, our purpose is to make much of the person of Jesus Christ. He follows that if he is to remain, that will mean one thing for him: fruitful labor, work that is necessary for the sake of others, to continue for their progress and joy in the faith.

According to Ephesians 4:11-12, the church is gifted with pastors whose job is to equip the saints for the work of ministry. Do you see that you are to do the work of ministry? You are not to “leave that to the professionals.” You are the professional - ministry is to be your ultimate occupation. Your job is just the arena by which you make much of Christ and meet the needs of others.

For Christians, the ministry is a “lifestyle devoted to making much of Christ and meeting the needs of others. It means that we do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith. Whether we are bankers or bricklayers, it means that we aim at advancing other people’s faith and holiness to the glory of God” (Piper, Future Grace: The Purifying Power of the Promises of God, p. 287).

This is not the only thing we do daily, but it is the overarching pattern, direction, and summary of your life. This is what we must desire in whatever we take on. Whether it is to correct our children, work projects, or exercise, people must be the purpose behind our every task. So how does Paul describe this lifestyle of ministry?

Ministry is work

First, Paul shows us here that ministry, or a lifestyle devoted to making much of Christ and meeting the needs of others, is work. Our duty to work is derived from our design. God created man to work. In the garden, when everything was perfect

and good, God made man co-regent to all His creation, and he was to work and till the ground. He was to keep it and cultivate it. He was to unravel all of God's beauty in His creation. Due to the fall, work has become complicated and sweaty.

The church had once lost the proper view of work and recovered it during the reformation. The reformers wished that not only could a plowboy understand the Scriptures, but now he could also find meaning in his work. Spiritual work is not better than secular work. When God created us, he made us to work. The Christian life is not a vacation but an occupation. We have many different vocations, which will be addressed in the next chapter. We have many areas of our life that require labor. Even as we enter a new era of work with the waves of socialism right ahead of us, our reward for hard work may not be financial in this life but something more remarkable in the next. We have to fight back against the pressures of socialism by continuing to work diligently.

The Greek word behind labor and work is *energia*, where we get the word energy. Work is merely an exertion of effort and energy. What is your energy going towards? Is it going towards fulfilling your roles excellently? Is it going towards magnifying Christ and meeting the needs of those around? Or are you exhausting all that you have to give on lesser things and things you think are right?

Work here is spiritual work, work for the kingdom and the Lord. "If I live in this life, I'll work and will be fruitful work." We do our earthly work into spiritual work when we set it apart and receive it with thanksgiving and prayer (2 Timothy 4:4-5). Balance requires work, and when we understand that our one thing to glorify God is not accomplished without labor. Not any kind of labor, here Paul is striving and aiming for fruitful labor.

Ministry seeks fruitfulness

What is fruit? Spiritual results. Fruit is Christ through you. It is anything done in the power of the Spirit for the glory of God. It is the person of Christ in words,

actions, or attitudes through your life to affect other people for the glory of God. Paul tells the Romans that he came to have fruit among them (Romans 1:13). Fruit is people getting saved (1 Cor. 16:15). Fruit of righteousness in Philippians 1:11. Fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5. Hebrews 13:15, the fruit of lips which praise to God.” Righteous deeds, righteous acts, righteous words, righteous ministry. Winning people to Christ, bearing fruit, producing something that lasts, that is eternal.

Paul is saying that if he stays in the world, he'll work and bear fruit. Henry Martyn says that you cannot die until you finish your mission, “You are immortal until God's work for you is done.” John Macarthur says, “He recognizes that fruit comes from work. And if he is to stay, it is to produce.”

Your purpose is a person, and people are our ministry. That is it. That is why you are here: for others. To make much of Christ by helping people become more like Christ or come to know Christ. That is discipleship. That is ministry. We have talked entirely about balancing life to accomplish what must be done rather than what we want. But notice here that this is an intense desire from Paul. This is what Paul wants, but it is also his duty. His duties have become his desires and his delight. He wants to bear fruit for the Lord's glory.

Too often, we want to get to heaven to escape life's problems. Here, Paul is torn. He is being pressed against all directions about being with the Lord or being with people. Why because he desires both. If you have children, men, you know this feeling. We must get away with our wives, and we have a responsibility to parent. While we are away, we love being away alone with our wives. You want to stay longer. You do not want to go back to your routine. But you have to because you miss your children. Your children need you. You must get back. But it's not just duty. It is a desire and a longing to see the children.

Godly men's desires should not surpass their desire for God's glory and their growth. This was Christ's ultimate example. He laid down his life because

ministry was more important than life. His devotion to accomplish His father's will as a servant gave his life a ransom for the many (Mark 10:45).

We see this tension in Paul centers him towards Christ. He is not idolizing or being idle. He is intentional about the Person of Christ being magnified in His body. Do you live under the same tension? One that centers you on Christ? Or are you being caught between the infantile dilemma of Christ and career, Christ and money, Christ and prestige, and power, fame, success, Christ, and family? But we must be careful that we don't work aimlessly and just for fruit. Understand that work is not just void and without spirituality. It is to be looked at as a service.

Ministry is a service

Ephesians 4:11 says we are to be equipped for the work of ministry. We are his servants, and He is our Lord. Our goal is to serve others to help them come under the Lordship of Christ. When we approach our entire life as a ministry, we must look at our whole life as a service unto the Lord. All that we do is in response to the Master's wishes. We will discuss this function in the next chapter on Stewardship, but this is important to note that our labors are in service to the Lord.

Men, when Christ calls us to deny ourselves and follow him (Luke 9:24-25), we enlisted as a soldier in His army (2 Timothy 2:5). Any good soldier will not "entangle himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that they may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier." We have orders to follow, and we should seek to be faithful in them.

Challies summarizes his book, *Do More Better*, with one phrase: we are to do more better to be free to serve and love people (Challies). That's it. That's why you bring things in order. You are responsible for getting things to their rightful place to do what God intended them to do so that you could be free to love and serve people.

We balance life and ministry to have an orderly life that allows us to peacefully and joyfully maximize our life and accomplish what must be done. We should view our list of things that must be done with people at the other end. Tasks, indirectly or directly, serve people.

Ministry is worship

Paul lays this out that when we make ministry how we fulfill our purpose, it becomes our means of worship. Romans 12:1, “therefore I urge you, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a sacrifice - living holy, and pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

Worship is the ultimate one thing and why we exist. We are to be a telescope that magnifies the greatness and grandeur of God by exhausting and expending ourselves for the person of Christ as we serve people is the overarching way we can do this (2 Corinthians 12:12).

In Hebrew, we have a word, *avodah*, that describes service, work, and worship. It implies that all our worship is in the form of work through service. Our love for the Lord requires labor and this labor brings worship to him. Our landing will not result from comfortable living but dying of self and laying our life for others.

1 Cor. 15:58, therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.” This is God’s vision for your life and ministry. He wants you to focus on one thing that everything else falls under. This is what it means to balance doing what must be done. Paul is assuming we will have things coming into our life that will push us around, like a storm wreaking havoc. If we build our life on the rock, we can stand steadfastly and immovably. In other words, we can maintain our balance no matter what. Our labor for the Lord is not easy. It will not be devoid of difficulties.

We are to abound in the work, service, of the Lord. To abound is to do it abundantly and be energized and wholehearted about making much of Christ and meeting the needs of others (Ephesians 6:6-7). This is how you increase your joy as you progress on the right goals in life.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

We have just addressed our mission, the one thing. The reason why we exist and the practical way of accomplishing that mission one way that is an umbrella for all other things we are commanded to do.

>> Write down your whole-life mission statement. This statement will enable you to reorient yourself when your heart swings towards idleness or idolatry.

>> Record your life verse that gives your mission meaning.

>> Weigh all your tasks, projects, opportunities up against this mission statement. What needs to be dropped, delegated, or done? Consider the people in your life. Who do you need to serve?

CHAPTER 5

BEYOND PRODUCTIVITY

Productivity has come a long way, and I stand on the shoulders of those who have come before me, specifically Tim Challies and Matt Perman. Their books, *Do More Better* and *What's Best Next*, are my top two for any Christian looking to be more effective. Like work-life balance, productivity is another trendy word. Unlike conventional wisdom, productivity is more than just being effective with your time, but being effectively stewarding your time, talents, treasures, and truth of God to impact the tribe God has given you.

As we saw in chapter 3, the stewardship of time is the cornerstone of all other stewardships. If you don't steward your time well, you don't pay your bills on time, you can't invest in the future, and you run out of room to shepherd your family and your small group.

Just like balancing your checkbook or YNAB account, balancing your time is critical to balancing life and ministry. Like we described before, the purpose of balance is not to equally distribute the same amount of hours to each area or person in life but to wisely discern what must be done and when for the glory of God. Stephen Covey says, "So good time management is not about squeezing more into life. It is about making sure you do what is important for you to do" (Covey, 2015).

I am not out to redo all the productivity approaches out there but to set out some productivity principles that go beyond time management and move towards helping you place everything in its rightful place, accomplish what matters most, and to experience the blessings of God despite the circumstances you may be in.

PRINCIPLE #1: KNOW

Know your self

I have already called you to examine where your heart goes astray so that you can begin to understand how to balance your life better. You also need to understand your capacity. You have physical, mental, and spiritual hindrances and limitations. You need to know them. Don't compare yourself to others. Don't look at another man and think he is the standard. Christ is the standard, and we strive to meet that standard but fail.

We must, therefore, pursue to reach our total capacity. Another man's calendar should not dictate your calendar so stop comparing calendars. You are responsible for you before the Lord. You want to max out your capacity and allow the Lord to stretch you and grow you. You also need to know how you are built as we looked at the talents from chapter three.

It is also essential to know when you do your best work and give that time to the most important and necessary work. We are all built differently, and to maximize our efforts for the Lord, we want to understand when we are most awake and energized. For some, that is morning; for others, in the evening.

Know your family

Your family's stage of life will determine how much and where you can go above and beyond. Your wife's capacity will also keep you within God's will. The number of kids and the age of your children can also put some limitations on how many business trips you can do or if you should pursue seminary at this moment. So, you should examine your wife and know her strengths, capacity, abilities, and desires. You may want to make it a rule to say yes to preach at every opportunity or travel for business, but if your wife can't handle and keep home orderly with four kids running around, then it's clear that the Lord's will is not that for you at this moment.

In an interview on balancing life and ministry, Kevin DeYoung says, “know her strengths, know the things that would be difficult for her, not take advantage of strengths or weaknesses. And some wives will excel in order and discipline and perhaps are less flexible, and others are maybe more easygoing and less ordered. We just need to love the wives that we have and understand that that will profoundly shape what we can do in ministry: sometimes to do more, sometimes to do less, the way we can do it. We really have to be mindful” (DeYoung).

Know the season

Know the season you are in. You are never to disobey the scriptures. But you are to know the seasons of life as certain seasons call for different tasks. Ecclesiastes 3:1 says there is a season for everything. Winter is not a season to go to the beach (for ordinary people). Winter is a time to ski, make a snowman, and vacation in Palm Springs. Winter months also mean shorter days and less sunlight, so it’s not a season of much outdoor activity, so you may want to take some extra vitamin D.

Discerning a season of trials will determine how much you expend yourself in other areas. Knowing you have just left a season of little ministry involvement, you know that you are about to enter and should enter into a season filled with more ministry because that’s what the Lord desires. Maybe you are about to embark on a new business opportunity, or you received a promotion that will take much time to adapt to, that will define how you reallocate your time and energy. Discerning the season you have left and are entering or are in is critical for balancing life and ministry to faithfully fulfill your duty.

Know the Scriptures

Lastly, know the scriptures. Know what the truth of God says about itself, your treasures, time, talents, and your tribe. What does the Lord call you to do? That’ll help for the next point. Know what you are called to steward and how to be a faithful steward and what the Lord expects you to accomplish. This is what it

means to build your life on the rock rather than sinking sand. Be immovable and steadfast by knowing the scriptures, and don't let the storms knock you off balance.

If you recall back to Joshua's faithfulness to obey God's word, the key to his success was meditating on the Word day and night. Psalm 1:2-3, "delight in the law of the Lord and meditate day and night... and you will prosper." Knowing the scriptures, prioritizing intimacy with the Lord (Philippians 3:8), meditating, and memorizing (Psalm 119:11) the Word will give you the wisdom and discernment you need to obey His every word in every season.

PRINCIPLE #2: IDENTIFY YOUR CALLINGS

As we learned in chapter four, you have been entrusted by the Lord to order, integrate, and maximize your time, treasure, talents, the truth, and tribe. With your assessment of those things in mind, now you want to take the time to put them where they belong. Chapter three discussed how the one thing is lived out in secondary arenas that the Lord has divinely and providently placed you in. These arenas - or spheres of influence - are your callings. Yes, men, you are called to influence God's kingdom by influencing people.

Whether you are a mechanic or a salesman, or a surgeon, God calls you to serve Him and serve others. Leland Ryken says, "The early protestants rightly conceived of our callings as being much broader than our job. All of our roles in life are callings. Being a spouse, a parent, a church member, a neighbor, and a Christian are all callings" (Ryken, p. 151) How do you determine your callings? You have to answer two questions:

>>**Where has God placed you?** Your calling is not something you choose, but something you walk into that has been given to you by God. The roles you play now are your calling. Are you a mother, father, employee, student, ministry leader, grandparent, employer, writer, etc.?

>>**Where has God positioned you?** This refers to the place you occupy in the present here and now. Where do you live? What city? What school? Where is your place of employment? What church do you attend? Who are your neighbors? Who are the people you frequently come across at the gym and the coffee shop, etc.? This is where you live out your calling to make much of Christ and meet the needs of others. Now list all your callings.

Next, you want to define the domains they belong in. This is just a matter of organization to lump these callings into larger groupings of domains or areas of responsibilities. For example, I take my callings and put them into a few domains: Personal, Family, Church, Social, Professional.

Lastly, each domain, or sphere of influence, consists of biblical priorities required for all your callings. Determine what those are for you according to your season, family, and how you are built. For example, for my family domain, here is what this process would look like:

DOMAIN: Family

>>**Spiritual care.** As a husband and father, I am responsible for shepherding and caring for the souls of my wife and children and anybody else living inside my home.

>>**Home Care.** As the man of the home, I am responsible that our home is organized and kept upright.

>>**Financial care.** As the leader of this home, I have a biblical priority to ensure my family is provided. We are giving to God's kingdom, and we are investing for the future and eternity.

PRINCIPLE #3: SERVE IN CONCENTRIC CIRCLES

In John Piper's sermon to Colossians 4:2, devote yourselves to prayer, he resounds with his concentric prayer approach. He says, "Consider praying in

concentric circles from your soul outward to the whole world. This is my regular practice” (Piper)

Begin close and pray in widening circles. Similarly, we ought to serve concentrically. We are first and foremost called to serve our own souls. I mean this in the sense of being ministered to before we seek to minister to others. As we strive to devote ourselves to a lifestyle of ministry, we should do so concentrically. The people closest to us should consider us as the most comparable examples to the living Christ. We minister to ourselves first not because we are more deserving than others, but because if God doesn’t awaken and strengthen and humble and fill our soul, we can’t serve anybody else effectively and rightly. So we must be pleased with the Lord every morning for our own soul’s perseverance and purification and power.

Then we should go next to our spouse. Our wives deserve the most of us. We must be one-woman kind of man. The primary characteristic of any man is to be above reproach and a faithful husband. That means we seek to serve our wives on a daily. We have a day-to-day responsibility towards them.

Then our children if we have children. They each need us. We serve them by fulfilling our duties towards them. We serve them by self-sacrifice acts of love. We serve them with the gospel and playtime. All inter-twined and unified towards the common goal that they know Jesus Christ.

We should then serve our blood families and church family—especially those within the ministries we serve. We should seek to disciple and serve in those contexts. Then as opportunities arise then, we go outside this circle. We may be less involved in our influence in cross-cultural missions as we seek to pray, raise, disciple, give, and serve a young man or family that is destined for the mission field not as frequent as our own families but sporadically throughout the years.

Hopefully, you see there that our service extends itself with a varying level of energy and efforts depending on how close they are to the center of our lives.

We can't serve everyone all the time. Not everyone deserves equal service from us. Our heart will also dictate much of our burden and our extent and to whom. Some days one family member or ministry partner will or crisis, or short-term mission trips will consume most of your time. But if you have a concentric circle pattern, you won't spin your wheels, wondering where to start and maintain your balance.

Disclaimer: "So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith." In other words, don't ignore the daily opportunities that the Spirit and God's providence prompt to do good and serve no matter where in the circle they reside.

PRINCIPLE #4: DETERMINE WHAT MUST BE DONE

If you are ambitious for the cause of Christ, you have a laundry list of things you want to do. You have dreams, projects, goals, and routines. You want to do it all. But you just can't. Even when trials hit and challenging circumstances to come your way, you must be able to narrow your focus to only what must be done. Faithfulness is about accomplishing the minimum standard.

For example, the minimum standard of faithfulness as a husband is to shepherd your wife as Christ does so. To love her sacrificially and die to self daily. For each husband this may look differently, but the principle for each one is there to love his wife and shepherd her. How we do that depends on the time of season, knowing your wife, know the need in the time of the moment. That minimum standard there is high. You want to determine those things and start creating a list under each priority and domain you worked on the point before. For example, utilizing the previous model of my family domain, this may look like:

DOMAIN: Family

>>Spiritual care.

- >>Family time, family devotions, one-on-one dates with each child, prayer time with Tawney, date night.
- >>Home Care.
 - >>Weekly home improvement projects, mow the lawn every two weeks, weekly cleaning.
- >>Financial care.
 - >> daily receipt tracking, weekly budget review, monthly budget forecast, quarterly financial assessment.

Roman wasn't built in a day, but they were laying bricks every hour [and every day]. What are the bricks that must be applied every day? That what must get done and nothing more? Stop daydreaming about what you want to get done and lay the bricks that will build up God's kingdom every day.

PRINCIPLE #5: CHOOSE LESS & WISELY

There is a reason we don't have peace in our lives: we are bombarded with so much. Numerous studies show that people have a lot harder time deciding to purchase something when there are many options to choose from. Too many options paralyze people. We talked about in chapter two how balance requires motion, progress towards becoming like Christ. You can't balance life when you are standing still, paralyzed in your decision-making process. The key to this is to choose less often. You do this by instilling routines & habits in your life.

>>Routines. A routine is a regular practice. Something that is not accommodated by circumstances. These rhythms of life are what help you keep your head above water when the tides start rising. This enables you to maintain peace and joy in your life and still thrive no matter your season.

There's a reason Mark Zuckerberg only buys a certain kind of shirt and jeans. He doesn't care about what he wears as it is only a provision for his

mission. He wants to predetermine certain decisions. Similarly, now you will take some time to predetermine where you will choose less and set up routines and habits in your life.

Before you begin, do note that your routine frequency can be daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, and even yearly. Start with the means of grace. The things that will enable you to depend on Christ's strength and grace like the word, prayer, fellowship, communion, corporate worship, etc. Some of those things are done daily: pray, giving thanks, meditating not the word. Other things are done weekly, like corporate worship and communion. Here is an example of a list of my routines:

>>**Daily**: devotion, prayer, planning my next day, exercise, family time and family devotions, and work.

>>**Weekly**: discipleship, fellowship, corporate worship, weekly forecasting, budget assessment, home improvements.

>>**Monthly**: Monthly reviews and monthly budget analysis, one-on-one meetings with sales reps, etc.

Now note the days and time frames (batch your work) that these must be done. Remember: for something to be a routine or habit, there must be frequency and consistency for becoming second nature for you. You will input these all into your calendar later.

>>**Tasks and projects**. This is where you choose wisely. Tasks and projects are one-time single efforts or requirements—something not done repetitively (task) or only for a certain amount of time (project). To help me choose what to say yes to or no to or how to prioritize, I use the Eisenhower matrix:

	<i>Urgent</i>	<i>Not Urgent</i>
<i>Important</i>	<p>Quadrant 1 <i>Important and urgent</i></p> <p><i>The quadrant of things that must get done, urgently, and nothing more. These are your daily top three things to do.</i></p>	<p>Quadrant 2 <i>Important but not urgent</i></p> <p><i>The quadrant of things that must get done but without restrictive time boundaries. These include special projects and goals that increase your impact and fruitfulness.</i></p>
<i>Not Important</i>	<p>Quadrant 3 <i>Urgent but not important</i></p> <p><i>The quadrant that requires wise decision making; may be deception or an opportunity to meet the needs of others.</i></p>	<p>Quadrant 4 <i>Not important or urgent</i></p> <p><i>The quadrant that keeps you from doing what matters most.</i></p>

Don't imitate the world where they automatically trash anything non-important and non-urgent. As Christians, we have a responsibility to deny ourselves and serve others. So, let the spirit lead, especially if it's something that could be done in less than five minutes.

PRINCIPLE #6: CONSOLIDATE YOUR WORK

Consolidating is different than batching your work. Batching means taking your routines and block out blocks of time to do something. Consolidating means you reduce the output of work by combining tasks, projects, and goals across different areas of life so that you can kill multiple birds with one stone. This is what it means to work smart.

For Example, RC Sproul says to use drive-time for learning: “Driving a car is another mechanical function that allows the mind to be alert to more than what is happening on the roadway. The benefits of an audiotape [or audio books] can be put to great use during these times. I can listen to lectures and instructional tapes while driving, thereby. Redeeming the time” (Mahaney, p. 12).

Similarly, if you are asked to preach, use your preparation time as your devotion. Use Sunday lessons or sermon series as your family devotions. Use your drive time to listen to audible, but if you know you will have an early abnormal start, use that time to listen to your bible passage or use that time to pray without ceasing. If you are writing, write on something you are currently working on in another area of life.

Discipleship can be consolidated for maximizing your life and time. Discipleship does not need to be carved out weekly for a formal sit-down. It also must be inorganic life on life. You can talk about being a Christ-follower, but one must also watch and be in the trenches. So run errands with a disciple. Take your kids with you. Work out with your children. Make it fun. Give treats for chores. Bring men around your family time. You have to get car work done, bring a young man with you and spend that waiting time with him.

I’m not asking you to multitask between creative tasks. That is shown to reduce efficacy but take routine mechanical tasks and combine them with another that requires creative process and intentionality.

This does require weekly planning. As you plan your week (if you don’t, you should; that should be a point here) and your days, take the time to see where you can consolidate. This becomes easier when you have scheduled your routines, tasks, and projects and have determined who you need to serve and surprise each week.

Principle #7: Focus on Fruitfulness

The goal is to do what must be done and meet the minimum standard of faithfulness. But we are also called to a fruitful life. John 15:8, "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."

In chapter four, we looked at what spiritual fruit was. Our labor is to be fruitful. We want spiritual results. There is also another layer of fruitfulness we haven't discussed. The authors of *Gospel at Work* describe it this way: "By principles for pursuing furtherer fruitfulness, we mean these ways in which we can grow beyond this minimum expectation of faithfulness. Once you think you're meeting the Bible's standard of faithfulness in all your assignments, you are free to dream and consider how you can best invest your extra time and energy... pursue faithfulness, then fruitfulness, but not idolatry" (Traeger & Gilbert, pp. 91-922).

Look, you may not care about your lawn as much. Yet as a treasure, you are responsible for there is a minimum expectation, however, of keeping your property orderly. Mow it, edge it, fertilize it, water it—the basics. There is the next level of fruitfulness that you may decide to take, especially if you are a landscaper. What you choose to be fruitful in will be determined by your talents and treasures, and time.

Regarding my lawn, I do the minimum. I like my grass to look green and show my son what hard work is around the home. If I ever need to take it up a level or do some deep level maintenance, I use a man from church to do it with me and consolidate.

Regarding my family, I want to be bountifully fruitful. I want to invest the extra time to plan and execute fruitfulness because I want my kids to grow up to know and love the Lord more than I ever could. Their souls weigh on me every day. I don't want to mess that up. I can mess up my yard for a season and suffer minor consequences. If I don't pursue fruitfulness with my children, it could have eternal consequences.

Focus on fruitfulness by utilizing goals. Goals are tangible ways to accomplish fruitfulness. There is a minimum expectation of faithfulness we do not want to fail in. But some goals take us beyond that.

What are some goals or special projects you are trying to take on to increase your fruitfulness? Before you do that, remember your talents, time, seasons, family, etc., everything we've been discussing has to come into play to decide which goals you will implement.

Special note: make sure your goals are SMART: Specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and bound by time. In other words, if my goal is to lose weight, that means I want to lose 10 lbs. by the end of this quarter by eating consistently and exercising daily 30 minutes a day.

Even take that to the next level and determine some life goals and even a One Passion goal. Life goals are those things you dream and hope of accomplishing. Goals that are so far out there motivate you and drive you out towards greater holiness and diligence. Failing at these goals does not make you unfaithful because they are not your minimum standard of faithfulness.

The one passion goal is the one thing you will pursue in this season of life that will serve as your one purpose in this generation, the one thing that summarizes your life in Christ. Like William Wilberforce's one passion goal was to abolish slavery. This is where you embody the spirit of William Carey when he said, "Attempt great things for God. Expect great things from God." How are you going to serve your purpose in this generation (Acts 13:36)?

Principle #8: Be Accountable and Interdependent

>>**Examine Yourself.** You want to have a process of constant evaluation. 1 Corinthians 13:5 says to examine yourself. This is why I block out daily, weekly, and quarterly times to evaluate myself. I call these my self-mastery times. As often as I can, I try to reflect on how I did. Where do I need to repent and return my heart to its rightful place before the Lord? What did I miss out on?

How can I change? Where did I drop the ball? How can I prevent that from happening next time?

>>**Accountable to the church.** Effective stewarding also is done better together. The plurality makes up the body of Christ, and together we strive to proclaim His excellencies (1 Peter 2:9). We are all just a small brick making up the larger house of God. We need others to speak into our life as we have blind spots in our life. We need to seek the counsel of godly men. We need godly men to emulate (1 Corinthians 11:1). Warning, be careful not to compare your capacity or your schedule with that of another man's. Just because one man's schedule is busier than yours does not mean that is your standard. You are to fill up your schedule accordingly to the time, tribe, and season of life that you are in.

>>**Accountable to your wife.** The Lord gives us our wives and their counsel and how they have been made to providentially keep us where we are or move us to where he wants to do. Don't forget, as my friend, ministry partner, and mentor, Shawn Farrell, always tells me, "You're on the same team. She is not against you." When you listen to her counsel, remember you are a team aiming towards building up Christ's kingdom. You are one and must be unified. So get on the same page and don't be so sensitive.

>> **Be interdependent.** You don't have to do it all yourself. There are others with vocations (another word for calling) that you are not called or skilled in. For example, I have a rule that anything outside of basic plumbing I will call the plumber. I do not have time or patience for this, and I also have the budget for it. Consider the length of time that something may take and what you have available. Is it something that pertains to your talents? Men, you should challenge yourself, but you should also be wise. Use others and their vocations. God has given them to you to help you. Reach out to those within the church with vocations you don't have and serve each other. Or use this time to do it with another young man and for the means of discipleship. Young men, give up your vocations to serve older men you want to spend time with.

Principle #9: Utilize Resources & Tools

Like a carpenter needs his saw, a mechanic his wrenches, a judge his constitution, Christians need tools to achieve balance. Use the means God has given in us in this day and age to increase our productivity. Time Challies says, “Tools are essentially human. At the dawn of human history, God created two people, naked and alone in a garden, and gave them a daunting task. They were to exercise dominion over the entire earth and fill it with people (Genesis 1:28). They could be successful in this calling only if they developed tools appropriate to the task—plows to prepare the earth for crops, saws to cut wood for fuel, bridges to span the rivers. The first humans were completely dependent upon their tools, and since then, in every area of life, each of us has been dependent upon our tools. This includes you in your pursuit of productivity” (Challies, p. 45).

A faithful person utilizes tools for the minimum standard of faithfulness. To increase fruitfulness, then you turn up the level of technology. For example, a surgeon must always use a scalpel if he wants to be faithful. If he wants to increase his efficiency and effectiveness, then what he uses next will determine that. So, you, too, have ordinary tools for meeting expectations of faithfulness: your shovel and Bible. “You rely on tools to do work you cannot do yourself or to do tasks better than you could otherwise do them” (Challies, p. 46)

The minimum requirement of faithfulness in our day and age requires you to have the following tools: scheduling tool, information tool, and task management tool. Any of these can be as simple as a piece of paper to digital apps on your phone. A scheduling tool enables you to budget and organizes your time. It also helps you with reminding you of events and appointments. A task management tool lets you plan. Unfortunately, there is no tool for execution; that’s all on you and your dependence, diligence, and discipline, which we will discuss in the final chapter. An information tool is what you use to record information you want to recall in the future.

I have a disclaimer about my tools. I use one consistent tool no matter what: a journal—multiple journals for different things. I have a journal to record my devotions, sermon application, self-examination, and prayers, etc. I have a table of content on these journals and categorize it as I go so that if I ever want to go back to what I said, I can. Usually, this becomes a brainstorming tool for me to use my computer to go into more detail or expand on something.

I have a journal that acts as my information, task, and scheduling tool. I use it as my life management setup, initial planning and scheduling, daily planning, and information capturing. I eventually get onto a digital app, but I love using physical tools first.

>>There are many options for a scheduling tool: a calendar app on your phone or an app like Fantastical. It depends on how you work and the simplicity you want to achieve.

>>Task management tool: you can use the full focus planner, a more straightforward app in ToDoist, or a more difficult one like ClickUp.

>>Capturing system: Where are you going to store documents and important information? You could use Evernote, Notion, Word document, Roam Research, etc. Now I utilize roam Research beta platform to do my note-taking and storing digital information (when I am not writing or working on paper). It helps me categorize my thoughts in an inline approach. Any system here is excellent but what matters is simplicity and consistency.

Because I am passionate about consolidating my time, I have moved over to using Notion for almost all my capturing, planning, note-taking, and storage needs. Notion is also an excellent tool for storing information about the people in your life. For example, I have a “my wife” folder where I store special notes about her that come up throughout the year. Things worthy of noting like her interests, the things she likes, her wish list, and many more. This comes in handy during the holidays when I need to buy her presents. I already have my list ready, and all I need to do is go on amazon and order. For others, I store things I know about

them when we met and where I met them and what I would like next steps for my serve that person better.

Principle #10: Rest **and enjoy life**

You can't talk about balance without talking about rest. We must work on keeping the sabbath. After God worked, he rested. Yet while he rested, he did not stop upholding the entire creation. So, we, too, must take on rest and reorient our hearts. We must refuel and recharge so that we can continue devoting ourselves to a lifestyle of ministry. Without it, we burn out.

It takes a correct view of self to rest. In our pride, we want to keep going and not rest. We think we can do it within our power. But rest and sleep are a gift from the Lord (Psalm 127:3). We need it if you want to keep running hard. Now, as you consider knowing the season you are in, there may be somewhere you sleep less and less rest. But note that that is just a season and should not be the constant pattern of your life.

Your rest is not idle, however. Idleness is sin. Being idle is not resting. Resting still maintains Christ at the center of our heart, and resting re-shifts the scales of our hearts so that God outweighs anything else. That's achieving true balance. It is being still and knowing that He is God (Exodus 3:14).

But rest is also leisure. Rest will look different for some. For my wife, resting is being with people and playing games. For her, rest is working on her plants and repotting them. It is doing DIY projects. Rest for me is being in my office, reading a book, or playing on the trampoline, or watching a movie with my kids. Also, discipleship does not stop during rest.

"The evidence suggests people who rest regularly are more productive - though the goal of sabbath is not increased productivity, but the glory of God. What constitutes work and rest will vary from person to person. Some people find gardening a chore; others find it relaxing. You'll know which activities you find restful" (Chester, p. 31).

Beware the binge resting where you run hard for a long time and then take a month off to “rest.” That is not true rest. Rest is a rhythm of life that we must practice.

HANGING IN THE BALANCE

Your practice of these principles will hang on the balance, and you’ll never progress if you don’t execute. None of what we accomplished can be done with you working it out. While we talked about goals, goals are ultimately temporary. A system is a rhythm of life and activities you do automatically without thinking. These activities are what make up who you are. You need a system or process that will help you achieve what must be done and matters most.

Instead of focusing on the game's score, you should focus on the consistent efforts needed to score a point. Scott Adams speaks about systems and says this, “For our purposes, let’s agree that goals are a reach-it-and-be-done situation, whereas a system is something you do regularly with a reasonable expectation that doing so will get you to a better place in your life. Systems have no deadlines, and on any given day, you probably can’t tell if they’re moving you in the right direction” (Adams, p. 33).

At the of the day, what matters is that you have a process that leads to progress. Like Atomic Habits, author James Clear says, “The purpose of setting goals is to win the game. The purpose of building systems is to continue playing the game. True long-term thinking is goal-less thinking. It’s not about any single accomplishment. It is about the cycle of endless refinement and continuous improvement. Ultimately, it is your commitment to the process that will determine your progress” (Clear, p. 27).

This is the Christian life. This is a life constantly in balance. This is the work of a lifetime: the cycle of continual efforts, day in and day out, fulfilling your daily duty and nothing more.

To be successful in what God requires, we must balance our life by having rhythms in life that we just do without thinking. This will lead to a more joyful and peaceful process that helps us accomplish what matters most.

>>Put these principles into practice and begin to shape your system. It's okay to trial and fail. It'll take time to find a process for how you execute and accomplish what must be done and matters most. A system is key for balancing life and ministry.

CHAPTER 6

MAINTAINING BALANCE

Having a system is critical. What's more important is the execution. Not just one time, but every moment by moment, day by day, week by week, year after year. That is how you balance life and finish the work of a lifetime. In this final chapter, we look at the three ways we maintain balance and execute to ensure we maximize our eternity and please our Lord.

Dignify

You must pursue excellence and make your work matter for God's purposes. That's why I use dignify (and to keep with my D's). The work we do doesn't dignify us. We dignify the work because of Christ through us (2 Timothy 4:3-4; Galatians 2:20). To dignify is to elevate our work and what we do to a higher, set apart level. Dignifying work, or pursuing excellence, is how we constantly live the Godward life and maximize our life. Like Paul, this should be our heartbeat:

1 Thess. 4:1,10, "Finally then, brethren, we request and exhort you in the Lord Jesus, that as you received from us instruction as to how you ought to walk and please God (just as you do walk), that you excel still more... for indeed you do practice it toward all the brethren who are in all Macedonia. But we urge you, brethren, to excel still more."

Philippians 1:9, "And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ".

Philippians 4:8, "Finally, brethren, whatever is... if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise dwell on these things."

1 Peter 2:9, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light”.

2 Peter 1:3, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His glory and excellence.... applying all diligence in your faith supply moral excellence....”

God is a God of excellence, and as his image-bearers, we must strive to manifest his excellence in the quality of our character and our work. To maximize our “T’s” and balance life and ministry, we must give the best of what we can offer according to our talents and capacity, the season of life allows, size and stage of life our family is in, the time we have available and excel still more in things that matter most. Colossians 3:23, work heartily as unto the Lord. In other words, do the best to your abilities and capacity with the time you have been given to present the Lord the best possible sacrifice at any given moment.

To do all this and maintain excellent balance, you need to depend on God’s power available to the one who has had his spiritual balance restored.

Depend

We have spoken about interdependency on the vocation of others and the accountability and influence of the church in our productivity and balancing of all things. All that dependence is futile if we are not, ultimately, depending on the Lord.

God has given us everything under His divine power so that we can live life the way it ought to be and according to His specific calling in our lives (2 Peter 1:3). To maintain a lifestyle devoted to making much of Christ and meeting the needs of others requires dependence on His Holy Spirit and His word.

It is the Spirit’s original work that restored the balance in your heart by giving you a new heart with tipped scales capable of valuing and weighing God much more significant than anything else. It is by His power that we can center

our pendulum and not swing as much because he indwells in us (1 Corinthians 6:19). But we cannot merely depend on the sole truth of the Spirit's indwelling of the believer. Man is also responsible for being filled by the spirit and get a hold of the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

To be filled by the Spirit and walk in the Spirit is to live in the conscious presence of the Lord Jesus Christ as you let the Word control you (Colossians 3:16) and dominate your mind (Romans 8:9). Remember Joshua 1 in the introduction? The key to his success was obeying every word that the Lord had said. The key to obedience was meditation of the Word of God. That's the key to being faithful and prospering (psalm 1:2-3).

Luke 10:38-42 shows us how Mary was able to choose the most important, necessary, and good thing over her sister, Martha, who was serving her brains out. Martha was concerned about "her" preparations (Luke 9:41) rather than the Lord's. This is what caused her to grow anxious and worried about lesser things. Mary, however, had chosen the better part: sitting at the feet of Jesus learning and being ministered to. At this moment, with the incarnate Lord present, that was what mattered most, for He would soon die, resurrect, and ascend. The principle remains, to maintain balance, we must depend on the Lord and learn from Him and be ministered to first so that we can focus on God's preparations rather than our own. This is why being dependent in our balancing of life means that we plan to grow and become more like Christ because balance is Godward living.

To maintain balance and harmony towards God and with the things that we are responsible for, we must work heartily but dependently on the grace and strength given to us in Christ (2 Timothy 2:1). Like Paul says, "1 Corinthians 15:10, but by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward did not prove vain, but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me."

Be diligent

You depend on the Lord, but you also need to be diligent. God is sovereign to complete the good work in you (Philippians 1:6), but we are responsible to a constant effort to accomplish what must be done.

Just because you are busy does not mean you are diligent. We want to ensure we don't go idle in life and stay away from the idol zone in our hearts. We need to reject the way of the sluggard and be diligent.

In proverbs, the sluggard is slothful, lazy, inactive, and simply lacks self-control. You could also be a hectic sluggard – busy with the wrong things and avoiding the things that must get done. The sluggard never balances life; he only cares about himself.

The sluggard is lazy and refuses to work; he can't start work nor finish work (Proverbs 20:4; 6:9; 19:24), loves sleep (proverbs 19:15), makes excuses (Proverbs 22:13), is conceited (proverbs 26:16), and misses out on opportunities amid abundance (Proverbs 12:27).

There are harsh consequences for the one who rejects diligence and goes the way of the sluggard like self-inflicted poverty (proverbs 10:4-5), perpetual want (Proverbs 20:4), hunger (proverbs 19:15), bondage (proverbs 12:24), disappointment (Proverbs 13:4), and ruin (Proverbs 24:30-31). Instead of influencing others towards Christ and conformity to His law, you bring shame to your family (proverbs 10:5), useless due to lack of trust (proverbs 10:26), and disrupt society (Proverbs 18:9).

The working man must be diligent, however, if he chooses to have godward balance. The man who has had spiritual harmony restored between him and God must lay aside the old man and be renewed and put on the new man (Ephesians 4:22-24). Therefore, he must no longer steal, "but rather he must labor, performing with his own hands what is good"(4:28).

We must first be diligent in keeping and guarding our hearts against evil, sin, and hindrances (Proverbs 4:23; Hebrews 12:1-2). We must persist in heart

work as heart work is the hardest work. Second, we must be faithful to pursue the workout that works, sanctification (Philippians 2:12-13). Lastly, we are to persist in abounding in the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 15:58).

To diligently maintain balance, you need to have the right mindset (Proverbs 10:5; Romans 12:2), have self-control so you can stay on task no matter what (Proverbs 16:32b), get up early (Proverbs 20:13; Proverbs 31:15), do the most challenging jobs first and then the easier jobs (Proverbs 22:29; 21:20), love what you do not because of activity you get to do but the purpose underlying the work and the Boss over the work (Proverbs 12:11), balance work and family life (Proverbs 15:16-17), seek to reap a harvest from all your work, even cleaning, school, or whatever it is (Proverbs 20:4, 27:18), ask God to bless your diligence, labor desperately for God's glory.

Discipline yourself

The ability to maintain diligent excellence requires one essential quality: self-discipline. We are to discipline ourselves in Godliness if we want to win the race of the Christian life (1 Corinthians 9:24; 1 Timothy 4:7), for this has an eternal profit.

Discipline is an athletic term that means rigorous, self-sacrificial training. This is the pathway to maintain balance of life and ministry. This is the fundamental quality of the man who devotes himself to a lifestyle of ministry and meeting the needs of others. The disciplined man is the man who says no to lesser things and accomplishes what must be done.

To grow in discipline, you have to practice it. You can start with ensuring you are disciplined in small tasks. Clean up after you are done with a space. Put things where they belong. You see something on the floor, pick it up. Say no to a second serving or dessert. Practice self-restraint in small areas so when larger temptations come, you are in the dependent habit of denying yourself. Also, this

will help you prepare to prevent chaos when trials and difficulties arise in your life.

Strive to always be on time by providing margins to your schedule. I struggle with this one but be like my wife and father-in-law, who are always 15 minutes early for everything. Always choose to do the hardest things first, as we talked about briefly above. Take a jar and fill it with small rocks, the big rocks won't fit. But you fill the jar up with big rocks first, then you can add in more of the small stones later.

Like we mentioned in the previous chapter, you need a system to maintain balance. A system, schedule, planning, daily to-do list, and weekly forecasting all empower you to take control of your time. You are on borrowed time, and discipline will enable you to make the most of it.

We have a duty to fulfill in life. The level of faithfulness in fulfilling your duty will determine how you spend the rest of eternity. But, with all that we have in life and the people we are responsible for, we must balance all things in a biblical and godly way. To maintain such balance, we need God's power, pursue excellence, diligence, and self-discipline. Without God's power and means we cannot do anything that will last into eternity. May we fulfill our duty and fulfill our purpose in our generation for the Glory of God.

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