

Finding a balance in daily living

Introduction

Years ago I went with my wife to watch a musical called 'Stop the World I Want to Get Off'. It was all about the feeling of being out of control and not being able to stop. Few people ever choose to experience the feeling of being absolutely and completely out of control. It is an awful feeling. It is uncomfortable, unnatural, and can create intense anxiety. Yet from time to time we all experience the sheer panic of being out of control. This can happen to us privately, but we can also feel that this is happening in international affairs, where we sense a powerlessness to change the course of events. Yet uncomfortable as we may feel in what we read, hear or see, facing turmoil in our own life can make us feel more out of control.

We all live life with a profound sense of looking for order out of the chaos of our life. We all long for peace in the midst of the turmoil of our life at times. We also want to learn how to regain control of life when it feels like it is slipping away. In this study we shall take a look at possible ways to gain control when life seems to be slipping and sliding away from us. What seems like a giant undertaking need not be so daunting for us we can call on God, who made the heavens and the earth, who is ready to help us, find the balance we need in our life.

Study 1

Finding a balance in your life

Introduction

No one likes being out of control. We have a built in desire and need for order in our lives; the real question is, how?

We can try the idea of New Year's resolutions, we have been moved and motivated by DVD'S to make the big commitments, only to watch our lives spin away from us again. We give things one more try, the diet, the

planner, the Bible, we say we mean business with the waistline, the daily tasks, our relationship with God, we are serious and we struggle. The first step we need to take is an honest and rigorous look at our life. We need to be honest to ourselves and honest before God, and honest to one another. The truth is that God wants to see you find the balance you need in your life.

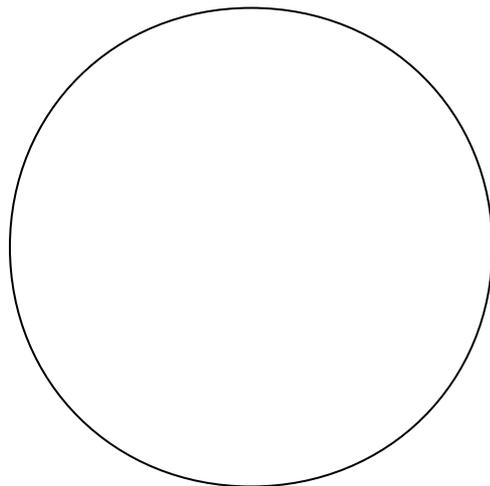
The big picture

1. Describe in detail a time when you experienced being out of control?
2. What feelings gripped your heart at that moment?

The Biblical picture

Read Genesis Ch 1 vs. 1-27

3. How do you see God creating order out of the chaos in the account of creation?
4. What do you learn about the character of God in this passage?
5. Read again Genesis Ch 1 v26. If human beings are created in the image of God, and God is a God of order, what do you learn about humanity from this passage?
6. Take a few minutes and create your own pie graph. Be sure it honestly reflects the levels of priority and commitment in your life. Think about where you are investing your time and energy at this time in your life. Some areas you might want to plot are your vocation [work], family life, friendships, recreation, hobbies, spiritual growth, physical health. Plot these and any other areas that are important to you



7. What is one observation you can make about yourself by looking at your pie graph?
8. What surprises you as you look at this representation of your life?

9. What is one area of your life in which you feel you have a good and healthy balance?
10. What is contributing to this area being so positive?
11. What area do you need to get a grip on as soon as possible?
12. What is standing in the way of you getting a balance in this area of your life?
13. What needs to change if you are going to finally get a balance in this area of your life?

Being in the picture

14. Take a moment and assess your life. On the continuum below, mark where you feel you are now in each area

My schedule/ diary

Out of balance		wobbly		balanced					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My physical health

Out of balance		wobbly		balanced					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My personal finances

Out of balance		wobbly		balanced					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My spiritual growth

Out of balance		wobbly		balanced					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

My relationships

Out of balance		wobbly		balanced					
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10

15. Identify one area of your life that your cell/ group members can begin praying for you to grow and get a balance in the coming weeks?
16. What is your strongest area right now?
17. How can you group/ cell members help you celebrate the strength you are experiencing in this area of your life?

Study 2

Finding a balance to your daily routine

Introduction

A few years ago Geoff Shattock wrote a book called *Wake up to Work*. At the end of each chapter he had a summary page, which he called "executive summary for the busy or lazy". Geoff was following a trend, which was around a few years ago, when a whole series of books were published around the theme of 'The One Minute manager'. You could have the One Minute father, the One minute Mother, to help with parenting skills, The One Minute lover, well that says it all. There is still a pressure to move faster, produce more. It seems that on the motorway of life, if you don't keep up the speed, you get run over. We live in a pathologically fast paced society, and in the midst of all of this God simply asks us to get a balance in our daily routine, we just have to learn how to do this, and find a place where with God's help we can control our life. The easy bit is to identify the issue the hard bit is to do it.

The big picture

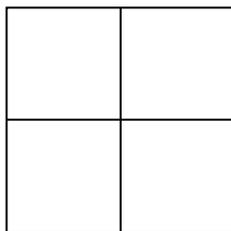
1. 'One Minute' books have been very popular. Why do you think so many people are attracted to this approach to life?
2. What is wrong with applying this 'one minute' approach to developing the Christian life?

The biblical picture

Read Ecclesiastes Ch 3 vs. 1-13 and Ephesians Ch 5 vs. 15-20

3. What do you learn and schedules form the Ecclesiastes reading?
4. The Apostle Paul gives wisdom in the Ephesians reading about time. How should we use our time?
5. How should we not use our time?
6. Summarise Paul's message from the passage in your own words. In one sentence what is he trying to say?
7. In what area of your life right now are you devoting too much time?
8. What needs to happen for you to cut back in this area?
9. What is one area you are neglecting?
10. What needs to happen for you to develop this area?
11. What do you think are some of the advantages of living with a life in balance between relational, physical, vocational, spiritual?

Being in the picture



This square looks pretty balanced; at its centre there is a cross. This suggests that the spiritual is not just a part of an active life to be balanced with everything else it becomes rather the core of every area of life.

12. How do you feel during those moments when you are in communication with God right in the middle of all life's busyness?

13. What helps you stay tuned in to God's presence through the daily grind of life?

14. What is one thing you do to keep God in the centre of one of these areas of your life?

Your family life

Your friendships

Your vocation

Your free time

Some other area

15. What is one thing you need to begin doing to help you keep God in the centre of one of these areas of your life?

Your family

Your friendships

Your vocation

Your free time

Some other area.

Study 3

Finding a balance in our bodies

Introduction

Most of us do care about our bodies. We are concerned about how they look, how they function, and how they are maintained. One only has to look at the cosmetic industry to see how true this is. However historically, Christianity has emphasised the soul or spirit almost to exclusion of the body. God certainly cares for souls but he also cares for our bodies. God sees us as total beings, body soul and spirit, bound inextricably together. The idea of splitting ourselves into body and soul should be avoided at all costs. In short God is concerned about us, and all that makes you, who you are. Our personalities, emotional make up temperament, body and soul and spirit all matter to God. God puts a value on our soul and our body.

The big picture

1. Name one goal you have concerning your physical health that you have kept. How has this commitment improved your quality of life?
2. What is one that you have not kept, and how have you regretted this?

The biblical picture

Read Romans Ch 12 vs 1-2 and 1 Corinthians Ch 6 vs 19-20

3. What does it mean to 'offer our bodies as living sacrifices'?
4. How is this an expression of worship?
5. 1 Corinthians 6 vs 19-20 says that the Holy Spirit of God actually lives in each follower of Christ. He also reminds us of the cost to Jesus Christ with this in mind, we are told to honour God with your body. What are examples of honouring God with your body?
6. What are examples of dishonouring God with your body?

Here are a few ways that God cares for our physical body

Our creation Genesis Ch 2 vs. 7

Our needs Matt. Ch 6 vs. 25-30

God became human Phil. 2 vs. 6-8

God dwells in us 1 Cor. 3 vs. 16-17

God offers us resurrection body 1 Cor 15vs 42-44 Rev 20 vs. 5-6.

7. One way God shows his concern for our body is through providing for our needs. How would you finish this statement;

God has provided for my physical well being by.....

Being in the picture

8. If your body is the temple [dwelling place] of the Holy Spirit, then God is always with you. If God was physically walking with you through this next week, what is the one thing that you would change?

9. In reality God will be with you through this week, so why doesn't this motivate us in the same way that His physical presence would?

10. If you compared your body to a high performance engine, how would you describe the fuel you are putting into it?

11. What needs to happen in your life and eating habits to upgrade the quality of fuel you are putting into your body?

12. What stands in the way of you developing habits of regular physical conditioning?

13. What is one way you are using your physical abilities to serve God?

14. How would better health and a higher energy level help you in this area of service?

15. What is one goal you will set yourself in response to the message of this session?

Study 4

Finding a balance in our finances

Introduction

We go to School to learn how to earn it. We work long hours each day to acquire it. We commit weekends and holidays creatively spending it. We get caught up worrying about it, we day dream about we can get more. Love of it causes many of society's crimes. The absence of it creates some of society's greatest nightmares. What is it? Money. The money monster is a hard character to pin down, we live in a cultured obsessed with it. We have all been drawn into the maze of confusion surrounding it. There are times when we all need to get a grip on how to handle our money. We all need to avoid the threats to our personal financial freedom. The treat of effect deceitful advertising, the availability of easy credit, and the absence of disciplined budgeting practices.

The big picture

1. How have you experienced tension in your life because of money?
2. What is one joy you have experienced because of money?

The biblical picture

Read 1 Timothy Ch 6 vs. 6-10 Proverbs 30 vs. 8-9 Hebrews Ch 13 vs5

3. What are some of the possible consequences for the person who becomes consumed with a love of money?
4. How should a follower of Christ view money and personal finances?
5. What are some of the common deceptions in advertisements?
6. What do you consider are some of the dangers of the credit card way of living?
7. How have you experienced the seductive lure of easy credit?

Being in the picture

8. What do you consider are some of the practical strategies for getting out of credit trouble?
9. Finish the following statements below
 - a. I have never lived with a budget, but I wish I knew how to...
 - b. I have budgeted in the past, but can't seem to stay on my budget. I wish someone could explain...
 - c. I live with a clear budget and have learnt...

Study 5

Finding a balance in your spiritual life

Introduction

There are many motivating factors for why people attend church. So go out of habit, some from a sense of duty to appease a spouse child or a parent, others as a form of penance, for others it's a social events, for others it's about dealing with loneliness and boredom. For others it is a hope that an item in the service will trigger something in their heart. They can learn how to live and take the next step in their Christian life. We all need to find a creative and dynamic approach to our spiritual life that invites freedom and room for the Holy Spirit to work within us.

The big picture

1. How would you describe your attitude and motivation when you first started attending church?
2. What moves you attend church today?
3. Why do you attend your cell?

The biblical picture

Read Hebrews Ch 4 vs. 14-16; Ch 10vs 19-25.

4. Some followers of Christ struggle with feeling that God is angry with them and does not want them entering His presence. How do these passages destroy that false mind-set?
5. How would you explain what God has done so that we can approach His throne any time, any place, with boldness and confidence?
6. Why would God go to such lengths just to be in relationship with us?

Being in the picture

One can develop a 'militaristic ' strict disciple to one's life. By using the language of you must, you need to get up early, do the devotional thing, and you have covered your spiritual bases for the day.

7. What are some of the advantages to this approach to your relationship with Christ?
8. What are some of the disadvantages?

9. Respond to the following statements

- a. If a follower of Christ does not spend 15 to 30 minutes in the Word every day, they just don't measure up to God's standard.
- b. If I don't spend the first 15 minutes of my day on my knees in prayer, I just can't go on. This is the only way to start the day. By the way what do you do first thing in the morning?
- c. The key to a real and deep Christian faith is having a daily consistent, in depth devotional Bible study and prayer
- d. I like to get my devotional time over first thing in the morning, so I can move on with my day

The opposite of this is the libertarian approach. Libertarians are people who seek spiritual growth when it feels right to them.

10. What are some of the pitfalls of this approach to growing as a follower of Jesus?

11. What are some signs that a person is approaching their faith with a libertarian mind-set?

12. Where do you see this mind set in the following areas of your life?

- a. in the church at large
- b. in our local fellowship
- c. in your own life

God isn't looking for a small section of our life; he wants to be involved in every single moment. He is looking for our devotional life to permeate the totality of our life. He wants it to be real not mechanical.

13. How have you experienced an open relationship and communication with God through the course of your daily activities?

14. What tends to keep you from experiencing this creative and dynamic interaction with God in the following spheres of life?

- a. in the workplace
- b. in your home
- c. church setting
- d. recreational pursuits
- e. in any other areas of your life

Study 6

Getting a balance in our relationships

Introduction.

It is important that we seek to establish strong ties with people who will establish strong ties with others people. We are social beings. For some of us this is easier to do than others. For a person who is highly relational, and who has many close friends, the richness of community is something they already experience and appreciate. To the person who finds building relationships difficult, and prefers their own company then the significance of relationships is still not very clear to them. God made us to be in relationships. We need to understand how relationships are an essential element of a healthy life.

The big picture

1 You're bored stiff. You want to call someone, who do you call? Whose name would you choose?

Name.....

2. You have just won a two-week, all expense paid holiday, if you are married you get to invite another married couple to come with you. If you are single you get to invite a friend. Who would you invite?

Name.....

3. Identify one name and say why you would choose that person?

4. How would your life be changed if you were no longer in relationship with this person?

The biblical picture

Read Genesis Ch 2vs. 15-23 and Psalm 133vs. 1

5. What does Genesis Ch 2 vs. 15-23 tell you about our need for human relationships?

6. What are some outward indications that people are experiencing unity in a relationship?

7. What are some of the indications that they are experiencing disunity?

8. Describe a time if you can when you have experienced loneliness?

9. How have meaningful relationships helped you through a lonely time?

In Luke Ch 15 there are three stories a lost sheep, coin and son. In each case that which is lost is found, there is great rejoicing. It is almost impossible to experience joy and not share it.

10. What is one joy you are experiencing in your life right now?

Ecclesiastes Ch 4 vs 10 speaks about when one falls down, his friend can help him up, but pity to the man who has no one to help him.'

11. Describe a time in your life when others came alongside you and helped carry a burden you were facing.

12. What is one load you are carrying right now that your group/ cell could help carry?

Proverbs Ch 11 vs. 14 puts it 'for lack of guidance a nation falls, but many advisers make victory sure'.

13. If possible share with your cell/ group about a life situation you are facing right now from one of the following, invite them to offer counsel and perspective

- a. in the workplace
- b. in family relationships
- c. in a friendship
- d. in a ministry situation
- e. in your neighbourhood
- f. in some other area of life

Being in the picture

We all need others to cheer us on, to confront us, to challenge us, to redirect us, to correct us, so that we don't just know God's truth but live it.

14. Describe someone who keeps you accountable and how this relationship has helped you grow as a follower of Christ

15. What is one area in which your group/ cell members can pray for you, encourage you, and keep you accountable?