

## BALANCING LIFE, WORK AND MINISTRY

### Introduction

We are living in a very challenging and highly demanding period of History. In the midst of a dynamic and changing socio-economic conditions in the world we are called to maintain our unique calling to be the 'Salt' of the earth and the 'Light' of the world. As the true disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ we have to be Role models as individuals and as families. Most of us start well in our Christian life and as we aim to live a victorious and fruitful life, we find the external pressures and at times the cares of this world hindering our progress and making us 'spiritually dull and ineffective' disciples. Further in our mere enthusiasm and without the guidance of God's Holy Spirit we get involved in a variety of spiritual activities. We don't set proper Goals for ourselves and fail to plan out our activities. As God's faithful Stewards we are called to properly use the 'Time, Talent and Treasures' that He has given to us. God's instruction to us is: "whether therefore you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God. [1 Corinthians 10:31]. The evidences of a Normal and Healthy Christian life are to be seen in our daily 'walk' as God's people confirming our 'talk' and verbal witness. In this short presentation an attempt is made to set the right priorities in the different areas of our life and explain how best we can live a well balanced Christian life and be effective in our work and ministry. A case study is included at the end of this presentation which will help to analyze, introspect and set proper goals in our lives.

### Balanced Personal Christian life ----- Me and my God

By faith when we receive the Lord Jesus Christ into our lives as our personal Lord and Saviour, we become the temples of the Holy Spirit, and God the Father plants within us the divine nature. We become a new creation. The new life within us will manifest itself in new living without. "We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works" (Ephesians 2:10).

The Navigators have pictured the Christian life as a wheel, with Christ as the Center. The spokes from Christ to our daily life are: The Word of God, Prayer, Witness and Fellowship. These Four are essential in the life of a Christian for living a fruitful life and for growing into maturity in Christ. We need to guard ourselves by giving equal importance to these for living a well balanced Christian life and to be effective in our serving the Lord in this world. How tragic it is to see the shipwrecked lives of many Christians who after a good start have lost their spiritual vigor and become blunt instruments by starving the soul without sufficient feeding on the word of God, managing to survive with minimum breathing of prayer, neglecting the fellowship with God's people and without a life of witnessing. It may seem that they need to be treated in the 'Intensive Care unit' of God for putting them back to a normal healthy Christian life.

There should be a constant check of our intimate fellowship with God on a regular and consistent basis. When we fail to have this fellowship with God and tend to substitute this with external spiritual activity we become unfruitful, remain stunted in our Christian life and have ineffective ministry. Though voluminous work can be externally seen and praised by people there is no quality of life and ministry. There is the need to consistently have a Quality Quiet Time [QQT] every

day in order to be instructed by the Lord through His living word and our communicating with Him in prayer.

God is interested in our 'Whole life' . We many times 'compartmentalize' our life into 'sacred' and 'secular'. The Lord bids each one of us in all life's actions to look to His calling and live it out as a whole for His glory. This calls for a total commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and willing to be controlled and guided by the Holy Spirit moment by moment in our lives. St .Paul exhorts the believers in Rome to present their bodies as a living sacrifice , holy, acceptable to God and to be transformed by the renewing of their minds and do the perfect and acceptable will of God. [Romans 12:1, 2]. This the primary requisite to live a well balanced Christian life.

As individuals we need to be disciplined each day by the Lord and be faithful Stewards in managing properly the Time, Talents , Treasures and Truth that he has entrusted to us. We have to carefully look after the physical health that God has graciously given to us and be cautious to manage with the stress and strain by balancing our sleep, eating habits, exercise etc.,

In Colossians 4:2-6 we see an emphasis on being effective on what we do: Devote yourself to prayer, keeping alert in it with an attitude of thanksgiving..... Conduct yourself with wisdom towards outsiders making the most of the opportunity. Let your speech always be with grace, seasoned, as it were, with salt, so that you know how you should respond to each person. For maximizing our effectiveness the following five steps will be helpful:

1. Pray: Be sure to pray and ask God for His wisdom and enablement
2. Establish objectives : Be aggressive in seeking to establish what you hope to accomplish in everything you do.
3. Make all efforts to multiply your time:
  - Be decisive and not vague about what you have to do.
  - Learn to say "No" to others and to yourself. Pray and consult the Lord before you decide on any matter.
  - Delegate whatever you can.
  - Maintain a good system for recording and reminding yourself of the things you have to do.
  - Watch out for typical time wasters- Sleeping too much, Watching too much Television, Talking too much with friends.
  - Reading books : Read books of value and of your subject- take notes as you go and review them at the end.

Remember the exhortation in I Thessalonians 5: 21, “. Examine everything carefully; hold fast to that which is good. “

### **Balanced family life : - ME and MY Family**

Family is to be given the next priority. Many will hesitate to place the Family at the top. Many have missed the mark by giving least importance to the Family. Maintaining a Christ centered Home is the primary responsibility of every believing couple. Attending to the needs of the family and to see that the joy of the Family life is not robbed away by an 'overdose of ministry or service' to the Lord. Commitment to family should be periodically analyzed so that there are no gray areas of neglect and overlapping. Time to be given to self and family should be

primary. Married couples have to be mindful of the needs of their spouses and provide the timely support in different areas of Family life. Husbands who are over active in ministry or too involved in work can fall into the trap of guilt by neglecting to give the proper attention to the wife or children.

If God has blessed us with Children sufficient effort should be put prayerfully to teach, train and motivate them at various stages of their life. There is a very definite responsibility that goes with the privilege and that is to raise those children according to God's standards aiming at God's perfect will to be accomplished in their lives. Family prayer and devotional life of the whole family should be maintained at all cost. Many families are pathetic models of the family of Eli as recorded in 1Samuel 2<sup>nd</sup>.chapter. Though Eli served the Lord in His temple, he failed to bring up his sons, who knew not the Lord, made themselves vile and brought dishonor to God . The Lord desires that by keeping our family bond in right ways and well balanced we keep the motto of Joshua as ours and say, 'As for me and my house we will serve the Lord' [Joshua 24:15]

The Family that prays together stays together. Also it is said that 'The family that eats together stays together'. Christian parents should be committed to pray and study the Bible together with the children. They should also teach and help the children to have their regular time of personal devotion by providing them with suitable Devotional books/guides. This is the area where many parents neglect in the midst of their busy ministry or schedule and bring sorrow to themselves and the children at later years. Parents should also plan prayerfully for the future of the children and save money for their education, marriage etc., In the place of work or ministry there can always be a substitute for us. We can also delegate things to others. But in our family 'you' alone have to fulfill your role with total commitment. No one can be blamed if you fail in this responsibility. Thus there is need for balancing our family life by constantly reviewing our priorities and ensure that there are no areas of neglect or overlapping with our ministry or work .

### **Balanced Church life : Me and My Church**

Every believer is called not only to be a member of the Body of Christ which is the Church but to be actively involved in building up the Church and work for the growth of His Kingdom. Individually and as a whole family we have to worship the Lord and serve Him in whatever way we can to build up His Kingdom. We need to contribute to the growth of the local Church by our faithful participation, giving of our tithes and offerings and getting involved in the evangelistic activities of the Church. However we must identify our specific role and take up only that work that we are called to do and gifted by the Holy Spirit. Involvement in the Church activity should be only to glorify God and not for self gratification or praise of men. Even in getting involved in the Church we should set the right priorities so that we avoid painful overlapping of the ministries to which we are already committed and the rightful responsibilities of the family.

### **Balanced Ministry and Service : - Me and my Service for the Lord**

All of us who are called to be the disciples of the Lord Jesus without exception are called to ministry. Some are called to be 'full time Ministers of the Gospel or Missionaries' and the rest to carry on the professional job for which we have been trained and also get involved in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ in fulfilling

His great Commission given in Matthew 28:19 and 20. While serving the Lord, He wants us to cultivate and exercise the spiritual gifts that He has given to us. We have to be actively involved in winning others for Christ, help them to be built up in their faith and motivate them to win others for the Saviour. While involved in the ministry one has to carefully maintain one's own spiritual strength and standards. Family attachments and responsibilities to be kept at right balance. St. Paul wants us to follow his example. "But I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway [1 Corinthians 9:27]. Our 'walk' should be in line with our 'talk'. Love of money and love for the things of this world should not grip us and make our ministry ineffective and unfruitful. Jesus said, "If any man serve me, let him follow me ..... if any man serve me him will my Father honour. [St. John 12:26].

### **Balanced Vocational area of life: - Me and My work**

Most of us spend more of our waking hours pursuing a vocation than in any other single activity. Our work may be in a Government/Private establishment in a Christian organization. We often tend to be over involved in the work neglecting our other areas of responsibility and commitment. The changing environment around us many times demands much more than regular working hours for which we are expected to work. Particularly those involved in the Computer Industry face stressful times. Those who are involved with dual responsibility of home and school have to stretch their nerves beyond their capacity. In the midst of such a situation God wants us to retain our spiritual vigor and do exploits for His glory. God who gave Daniel of old the wisdom to excel in his work and stand against all the pressures around him is our God even today to support us and stand as His triumphing children and not collapse under pressure.

To be victorious in this area we need to pray for specific wisdom to manage with our job and enjoy the power of the Holy Spirit to excel in our efforts. We should follow the instructions given by St. Paul in Colossians 3: 17 and 23. "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him. And whatever ye do, do it heartily as to the Lord, and not unto men. Knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance; for ye serve the Lord Christ."

We should regularly evaluate our status and ensure that the right balance is maintained in the area of our work without affecting our spiritual life and home life.

### **Overall Balancing of personal life, Church life, ministry and work**

Increasing pressure of work which demands stretching of our every nerve is on one side. The 'rat race' that is constantly on at the place of work is one which haunts the believer all the time; once caught in it we are unable to wriggle out. Lack of justice and integrity in the place of work many times makes us disheartened and makes one wonder at times whether it is the right place to be in and the right job to be doing??

All work and ministry without intimate fellowship with God has made many disciples to live a dry life of emptiness without the true joy of the Lord and lack power to withstand the pressures of the world. The form and external signs of

discipleship exists while the real power of God is nearly drained -off bringing disappointment in the inner man. Those who live such lives are carried away by the external things of 'doing' rather than 'being' the kind of disciples that Jesus Christ wants them to be. Many fall into such traps because of the fear of man and trying to please the 'ego' or the spectators in the arena of Christian ministry. The strong hold of the fear of man and under the feeling 'what others would think of me' - one stands guilty of coming short of the expectations of God. In the triangular conflict of meeting the expectations of God, other's expectations and one's own desire to serve the Lord faithfully, there is only a partial victory. At times we tend to do so many things and accomplish very little. As the disciples told the Lord Jesus we tell many times, Lord we have toiled all the night, and have caught no fish; nevertheless at thy word we will let down the net for a fresh catch.

Need to discern clearly between things which are approved of God and things which gratify my 'self' ' Or please others. The values of serving the Lord should not be sacrificed at the expense of gaining self glory.

Need to have personal Integrity in all areas of life and prove ourselves to be the salt of the earth and light of the world. Our talk must be in line with our walk so that the world may see our good works and glorify the Father who is in heaven .

Learn to say No, after consulting the Lord instead of saying 'Yes' to all proposals and demands is one way of balancing our life, work and ministry. We should not be 'men pleasers'. We should recall the words of the Lord Jesus and follow His example. Jesus said, He that sent me is with me and the Father has not left me alone for I do always those things that please Him. [St. John 8:29]

In concluding we have to bear in our minds the following few principles / guidelines in Balancing our life, work and ministry:

- We need to keep walking closely with God, both to discern His wisdom and to have power to do what is pleasing to Him. Prayer and study of God's word are the main keys for a balanced life.
- We need to live with the attitude which recognizes that our families, our assets, our work/ministry and time belong to God.
- Stay sensitive to time. It is a very valuable resource that God has given to us. We need to know what is priority and then seek to do it.
- Aim at being good Role Models- as individuals/couples and as Families.
- We have to live in total dependence on God and be willing to be led by the Holy Spirit.
- Don't expect magic to happen overnight. Learning to Balance all vital activities of our life is an on-going life-time experience.
- We have to be spiritual in our upward look but be practical in our daily walk in this world.
- Fear God and you will have nothing else to fear. "The fear of man brings a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord shall be safe". [ Proverbs 29:25 ]