



Balance

“Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, ‘This is the way, walk in it,’ whenever you turn to the right hand or to the left” (Isaiah 30:21 NKJ).

Someone once said balance is the most difficult position in life to achieve and maintain. Maybe that’s because our lives are susceptible to numerous forces, many of which are beyond our control. Just when we think we have a plan that works and life is flowing satisfactorily, something happens. There’s a crisis or some change—good or bad—that requires unexpected adjustments. Then the quest for balance begins again.

Life is like that—ever changing. There is only one constant—One who is immovable, unshakable, unchanging—and that is God. He is steady, no matter what happens in the universe. He is not rigid, but steadfast. Our goal is to be more like Him, through the working of His Holy Spirit in us. He wants His people to have balance.

Today’s Scripture describes one way God will help us to be balanced in our life journey. As we walk each day with God, encountering events requiring decisions and actions, God promises to let us know if we are turning to the right or to the left instead of straight forward. On each side of our path are ditches of extremes. One is the extreme of doing too much and the other is the extreme of doing too little.

We face the possibility of these extremes in pretty much all areas of our lives. We can overdo in our Christmas shopping, in our cooking, in our spending, in our eating, in our working, in our recreation, and even in our spiritual life. Or we can under do. When I asked God what the topic should be for this teaching letter, He said, “Balance.” My reply: “I don’t know anything about that.” I need balance as much as anybody. So, may God help you and me to live balanced lives.

Achieving and maintaining balance requires intentionality and God’s help. Our lives have been given to us by God as a stewardship. He is the true owner, and we will give an account of how we have managed. Not only did God create us, but He bought us by the price of His only Son, Jesus. We are doubly His, but He has allowed us choices that will affect how our lives turn out. Our choices can lead our steps straight forward or to the right or left extreme.

God promises to guide us in our choices and thus keep our feet on the best path if we will listen to His voice. Other voices will speak, for example our flesh, which seeks the easy path, the “feel good” choice, or some immediate gratification. Satan, our adversary, will encourage us to listen to our flesh and will present opportunities for poor choices. Satan hopes to destroy in any way possible, but God encourages us to be alert and informed regarding our adversary’s tactics—one of which is to lead us into imbalance in some way.

I’m reminded of Eli the priest, whom we read about in 1 Samuel. Although he corrected his sons, he did too little regarding their wicked behaviors against the Lord. God said Eli honored his sons more than God (1 Samuel 2:29). This led to his sons’ premature deaths as God’s judgment upon them. Eli’s sons also led many others into wickedness. Parenting requires wisdom, diligence and the help of God to be balanced.

Parenting patterns can range from extremely indulgent to extremely controlling. Parents may give too little appropriate correction to their children, such as Eli and even King David. I’ve known parents who withheld affection or failed to provide for their children’s other genuine needs, believing they would spoil them if they demonstrated love or

gave them things they needed. I've also known passive parents who simply did not make the effort to set appropriate limits for their children. Many parents overindulge their children, not knowing this extreme is also harmful. No parent will be perfect, but we must seek balance and God's will in each choice we make.

Happy is the person who has most areas of life in balance. To be out of balance, for example in our finances, will cause problems in other areas as well. Financial problems can be a source for relational problems in marriage. Our giving to God's kingdom work and to people in need will be hindered by poor financial decisions.

Because we are tri-part beings, one way to help maintain balance is to give appropriate attention to the God-ordained functioning of the spirit, soul and body. It is impossible to divide these areas into distinct compartments because each area affects the others. For example, if I worry a lot (soul), over a period of time my physical health can decline. I might develop an ulcer. If I exercise properly to maintain my body strength, I will be able to continue the work God has called me to do, longer and easier. I want to finish my race strong in spirit, soul and body.

To gain balance, it is important to understand how God intended our spirit, soul and body to function together. You've probably heard it said that we *are* a spirit, we *have* a soul and we *live in* a body. I believe that is a fairly good description. God, our creator and designer, intended our spirit to be the Holy Spirit's dwelling place and the place of communion with God. Our spirit—under God—must be in leadership among our three parts. The soul was made as sort of the assistant to the spirit, and the body was intended as the servant.

When Adam and Eve fell, the order or balance within humankind became disrupted and the soul became the director instead. Now, in order to maintain the balance God intended, the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit is required through the new birth, so that we can live a Holy Spirit controlled life. However, it still is possible for Christians to live controlled by the soul and body. That's why Paul told the Galatians to “. . . Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh” (Galatians5:16).

One reason there is such a battle to have balance in our lives is the struggle within us among the spirit and the soul and body. The soul is our mind, will, emotions. If our soul is in leadership, our lives will be out of balance. The soul gravitates toward the things of the world, such as position, possessions, power, pleasure and so on—things that are temporary but soul gratifying for a time. The body seeks what feels good or tastes good. Both the soul and body, without leadership by the Holy Spirit in our spirit, will find either the ditch of too much or of too little—or of completely wrong choices. We should not be controlled by what “I think” (the mind) or what “I want” (the desires of the soul or body) or what “I feel” (the emotions) but by what God thinks and wants for us. I believe that may be one thing Paul meant when he said, “I die daily” (1 Corinthians 15:31). It is a daily decision to choose to be led by the Spirit and not by the soul or body.

Paul told the Romans that “those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace, because the carnal mind is enmity against God. . . .” (Romans 8:5-7). These were Christians he was speaking to.

Jesus said, “And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength. . . .” (Mark 12:30). Part of what this means is that we are to be led by the Spirit and focus on the things of God with every aspect of who we are. It will get easier as we practice it.

If you would like to join me in asking God's help to have greater balance in your life, pray with me: “Father God, thank You so much that You are my helper in everything, especially in my weaknesses. I confess my need of You in gaining and maintaining balance in my life. Help me now, in Jesus' name. Thank You. Amen.” If you meant that prayer, God will help you. **SH**

GOD'S WORD FOR TODAY
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“Balance”

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