

Life Is a Balancing Act

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Ecclesiastes 7:18

“It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other. The man who fears God will avoid all extremes.”

Have you noticed how apparent it is when something is not balanced? If you are sitting in a chair with one shorter leg, or loose leg ... it wobbles. A refrigerator or washing machine with unbalanced legs wobbles or vibrates. Tires, out of alignment cause your steering wheel to wobble in your hands. It can be annoying, if not damaging.

Musicians in an ensemble need to find the right balance between the volumes of the various instruments or voices in order to sound harmonious. They could all be in tune, but if one part is louder than the others, it is distracting and can ruin the entire performance.

Businesses know these lessons as they balance marketing and sales efforts with expenditures and profits. Investment portfolios need attention when it comes to balance. Sports teams know this: there must be a good balance between offense and defense, speed and strength, youth and experience.

It was John Wooden, coach of the UCLA basketball team from 1948-1975, who said, “Next to love, balance is the most important thing.”

Balance is important in every area of life and nature. If your fish tank is out of balance, the water gets murky, and the angel fish start looking for a new home. Finding balance can sometimes mean reassessing the need for the things that are mucking up our lives, such as our thinking and our hearts. Sometimes it is allowing damaging relationships to end; for negative and disrespectful people to fall lower on our 'must visit' list. At other times it is thought patterns, self-talk, and habits that must be addressed.

Look around you and within you and take inventory of what is unbalancing your life. What is wobbling? Take the steps necessary to fix the broken table leg, replace the tires, tighten the screws, and caulk the windows -- find the balance.

Make a concerted effort to avoid the extremes, on either end of the scale. As Solomon said, "It is good to grasp the one and not let go of the other." This doesn't necessarily mean that we have to stop all of our delicious but damaging activities. Just find the balance. If we eat too many desserts, our lives start to wobble. We don't have to stop, just find the balance. If we assess ourselves as lazy, find the balance between doing nothing and being industrious.

The song states that to everything there is a purpose and its time. 2 Timothy 1:7 says: *For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.* This doesn't mean that we will never feel fear; it means that our inherent nature is not fear. It is power, love, and self-control. But there is a time for fear, tearing down, death, war, reaping, weeping, mourning, and losing, just as there is a time for their opposites.

Science has proven that everything vibrates; alternating rapidly between two distinct points. The material world could be easily described as “the very rapidly vibrating” world. If images are flashed quickly enough, it just seems like one solid picture.

That is balance. Nature finds its balance. Winter moves to Spring, then Summer, then Autumn, and back to Winter. There is a cycle, a repeated vibration ... balance. When climate change interrupts this cycle, we sense the wobble in the natural way of things. There is order in all things; a purpose to all things. Everything fits. There is balance.

Balance is not getting rid of all the wrong or disliked things. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote: “Evermore in the world is this marvelous balance of beauty and disgust, magnificence and rats.”

Often time it is our focus that needs adjustment as we seek balance. Are we looking at the magnificence or the rats? When Rebecca is spinning while dancing, one way she keeps her balance is by focusing on one fixed spot as it passes by her line of sight. It keeps her from getting dizzy; it keeps her upright. Where are we focused in our lives, relationships, finances, diet and fitness, educational desires, and in our spiritual lives?

Some of our lives are so busy, we feel a little dizzy once in a while. This is a sign of unbalance, and that we need to refocus.

Isaiah 26:3 teaches us: “*You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!*” When our thoughts

are fixed on God within, we are more stable in all areas of our life. We wobble less.

“For thou wilt light my candle: the Lord my God will enlighten my darkness.” (Psalm 18:28). The darkness refers to the confusion, hesitation, frustration, or anything that would unbalance us and dim the light within us.

To speak of balance is to speak of peace, poise, stability and steadiness. Related words are moderation and temperance. Moderation is to be even-minded, reasonable, sensible, judicious, and self-controlled. Philippians 4:5 reads: “Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.” In 1 Corinthians 9:25 Paul compares temperance to a race. *“And everyone that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things.”*

Paramahansa Yogananda taught his students: Be even-minded and cheerful. What comes of itself, let it come. Refer every joy and every pleasure back to the joy of the inner Self, and let every sorrow remind you that your home is not here, in the world of sensory experiences, but in the eternal joy of the soul.

We can build balance into our lives and thinking by taking time in a few areas. We can take time for God by allowing a few minutes a day to pray or meditate. This helps keep us physically and spiritually balanced.

We can take the time to plan for emergencies, plan for situations that we know might stretch us, or demand our most, or push our

buttons. If we plan a response, when the situation occurs we remain more balanced; we are not caught off guard.

We can take time to nurture our family ties. We can take time for ourselves: to play and enjoy ourselves. This fun time feeds our soul and helps us be more effective with others.

We can also take time to reflect on our life. How do we spend our time? Does the way we spend our time truly reflect our priorities or are we out of balance? How are we handling our schedules and the stresses that arise?

A group of Americans exploring Africa had hired native guides. Each day they pushed the guides to go faster and a little bit farther, until one day the guides sat down and refused to move on. The Americans could not understand this and asked, “Why do you sit down when we have so far to go?” The guides replied, “We are letting our soul catch up with our body.”

When we are too busy, we can lose a sense of ‘groundedness’, of being in this moment right now. Our thoughts move to the past and what we have done, or to the future and all that is still to come, and we are no longer present with what we are doing this moment. One foot is on the land, the other at sea; we are unbalanced.

Turning within to Spirit allows us to ‘catch up with our body’. We have enough time to accomplish what is ours to do. We can maneuver easily between our responsibilities and recreation and take the breaks we need. As we find our focus and balance, everything happens more easily, and we are at peace.

At times our unbalance shows up as illness; our health wobbles. When we are ill, not only do we need to tend to our bodies, but we must pay attention to our spiritual well-being. Are we forgiving everyone and everything that has caused us pain and inconvenience? Do we love our neighbor, as the Christ asks? Are we connected with our Source?

As we find balance, we cultivate a loving heart. As we cultivate a loving heart, we find balance. We achieve balance as we align our divine nature with our human nature. By allowing our attention to move inward to the awaiting Christ, we express outwardly our humanity and divinity, which provides balance, poise, and stability in all that we do, say, and think. Through balance we become more open to the whispers that God sends to our hearts.

Life is a balancing act. At a circus we are enthralled with how the high-wire act progresses. How someone can remain so calm and at peace on such a thin wire. And have you notice how peaceful their bodies are as they maintain this seemingly impossible feat.

It is true of athletes on skis and skates and beams. Their bodies are at peace – actively engaged, but no spare energy is allowed for fear and trepidation. They are allowing their energy to flow through them unhindered. Peace follows balance, almost without exception.

That's our destiny, is it not? To hear, respond, and express the Christ fully and freely, to be so well balanced that we live in peace as we move throughout a world that is often blind to God's love, life and grace. As Albert Einstein said: Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving.

Just as the atoms vibrate within our bodies, we continue moving from moment to moment, through the despair and darkness but ever back again to the Light and Joy.

Author and Minister, Robert Fulgham said this: Be aware of wonder. Live a balanced life - learn some and think some and draw and paint and sing and dance and play and work every day some.

No matter our activity, I pray that we can be aware of Spirit's presence helping us to maintain a proper perspective and balance. I pray that we can approach every activity with confidence, with a sense of newness, and without a wobble. My prayer is that we can find our balance and avoid living in the extremes, as Solomon suggests. In this way we equip ourselves to gain the most from every moment and to give the most of ourselves to every moment through our uniqueness.

Let us pray....